THE NEW SCHOOL

OF

URDU LITERATURE.

A Critical study of Hali, Azad,
Nazir Ahmad, Rattan Nath Sarshar,
and Abdul Halim Sharar.
with an Introductory Chapter on Urdu Literature.

BY

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1932.

SH. MUBARAK ALI, BOOKSELLER,
Inside Lohari Gate, LAHORE.

[illegible] Edition *Price [illegible]*

PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

This small book, of which a reprint is now offered to the public, was published more than twenty years ago. Very few English-knowing Indians cared for Urdu in those days and the main object of these essays was to invite them to a study of their own literature. The effort was appreciated at the time but could not, unfortunately, be followed by further work in the same direction. The first edition of the book got exhausted soon, but I did not think it worth while to print a second edition. I have now been asked to deliver a series of lectures on modern Urdu writers and it has been suggested to me that a reprint of my old book may be found useful as a sort of introduction to the series. I am concious that these essays are not upto date but they may be interesting as a comparative study when read side by side with the lectures to be delivered shortly. Many things have changed since these essays were written. Many of the authors who were then alive have departed from this world. In fact *Sharar* is the only one of them who is in the land of the living. What I then called "the new school of Urdu literature" has given place to a newer school. Urdu is now being more widely and more eagerly read than was the case before and there is a growing interest in the story of its literature and in the life and work of its best writers. To take note of such changes and developments will be one of the objects of the proposed lectures, while this reprint will indicate the stage of progress reached two decades back. I am, therefore, publishing the old book without any attempt at revising it, to give it to the readers exactly as it was then and for whatever it may be worth now.

1921, ABDUL QADIR.

PREFACE

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

The following sketches containing a criticism of the works of the best known living writers of Urdu representating the new school of Urdu literature, now published in the form of a book, were not originally meant for the purpose. The first three of them were read at different meetings of a local Association and were published in local periodicals. In reprinting them I have not had leisure to alter them so as to make them more suitable to the form in which they now appear. I am not sure if they contain much deserving of appreiation further than what they have received, but as an excuse for placing them before the public once more I have added three other sketches which have not seen the light before. I do not claim that the list of the living representatives of what I have called the "New School of Urdu literature" is exhausted by the five authors whose works I have reviewed, and am conscious that this book will require considerable additions before it can be called exhaustive of all that is noteworthy in the new school of writers.

Realising the difficulty of assigning each one of the five literary luminaries of India his respective place in order of merit, I have arranged the sketches in order in which they were originally printed or written and wish clearly to state that the arrangement is independant of any significance as to relative merit. Moreover, so different is the sphere occupied by each one of the five eminent writers, so individual and characteristic is the style of each writing, that it would have been imposible to decide who is best, even if I had the indiscretion to try to pronounce on the matter.

It will be observed that of the five authors reviewed herein four are essentially writers of prose, and in Hali we have the solitary poet of the new school. At first I thought of keeping Hali out of

this collection, to be given with a similar collection of the best Urdu poets of the day, if I ever attempt it, and to have only prose-writers in this book. But the fear that Hali, with his novel ideals of poetry, will not be in keeping with his surroundings if placed side by side with Dag and Amir, with whom he has little in common, inclined me to have all living writers of the new school together. In this gallaxy of eminent men, the grandest figure of all, the commanding personality of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan will be greatly missed, but his lamented death has robbed me of the privilege of including his name in the present collection. Besides, his remarkable work as a man of action makes it very difficult to have a purely literary sketch of him unblended with the influence of his activity in other directions, and I do not want just as present to trespass on the domain of his learned biographer and friend, Maulvi Hali, whose "Life of Sir Syed Ahmad" is ready for the press.

In conclusion I have to express a hope that this attempt will lead to further efforts in the direction of original and independent criticism of our literature from pens abler than myself and to state that if I find any appreciation of these sketches, I may try to prepare a similar collection of critical essays on the great masters of the Urdu language of the old school, including the two living poets, Dag and Amir, who, though born in this age, belong essentially to the generation that has passed away, in thoughts embodied in their writings.

1898 *S. A. Q.*

URDU LITERATURE.

Travelling through a well-trodden path is at once easy and safe, and, had I consulted my own convenience, I would have taken a subject on which much might have been said already and then all I would have required would have been the tact and skill to use the scissors. But I have taken up Urdu Literature for my subject this evening, because I have noticed how sadly neglected it is among those receiving English education. It is with a hope to rouse in your minds an interest in Urdu and to set you at least athinking about it that I have come before you. Subjects of this kind are hard to deal with, and, in spite of the best efforts of a writer to make them interesting, tax the patience of the audience to not a small extent, because an enquirey into the origin and growth of any literature is rather tedious and, except to a chosen few, often uninteresting. A lecture on literature generally contains a story of that literature, the various kinds of compositions in it, accounts of its most eminent authors, criticism of their styles, enumeration of their works, and quotations to illustrate the peculiarities of every style. A discussion at length of all this would require a volume. Therefore I would content myself with briefly dwelling upon each head and will just clear the way for further discussion of the subject in future.

Before proceeding with the description of the origin of the language, I cannot resist the tempta-

Note.—It was in August 1893 that this paper was read before a meeting of the Young Man's Muhammadan Association, Lahore, and published in the Punjab Magazine for the same month. It is a reproduction from the Magazine, with very slight alteration.

tion of impressing upon your minds how important it is to study Urdu literature, to encourage it to a proper extent and to engage in it as a literary persuit. The first reason why I think it to be important is that the best way of reaching the common people, of enlisting their sympathies in any cause whatsoever of securing their affections, of winning their confidence, of enlightening and civilising them, is through the medium of the vernacular. It is the only language which has the capacity of furnishing a national litrature for the country, without possessing which no nation can make any progress worth the name as litrature plays no insignificant part in making a nation what it is. Another thing which lends an importance to Urdu is that, notwithstanding there being different dialects in the different provinces of India, it is understood all over the country as a matter of fact, and serves the purpose of the *lingua franca* of Europe for the merchant and the traveller in India. The more its progress the easier it will be to trade with and travel through all parts of India. In Upper India especially its knowledge is indispensible to members of almost every profession. A legal practitioner has a better chance of success in all the lower Courts, if he can make an effective speech in Urdu than if he is an orator in English. The Magistracy must know it, and the *amla* cannot do without it. How then can a man afford to neglect it in the course of his education. Some of our enlightened men who have received liberal English education object to the progress of Urdu literature on the ground that there is nothing but زلف مشکیں , خال سیه , and کمر موئے in Urdu literature and it is a waste of time to study it. This is like the common saying that there are only descriptions of گل , بلبل in the Persian literature, or as our orthodox Mulla will say that "there is nothing but cat and dog and pig in English," an impression received from hearing a beginner reading an English primer. But, *you* know better. You know

that English is not so narrow a language as has to do with only cat and dog, but on the contrary is one of the widest languages of the world and has a vast and various store of literature which would require twenty lives to read. Though Urdu and Persian are not possessed of so vast a literature and are not so free from objectionable elements as English is, yet we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that they belong to the category of the sweetest languages of the the earth according to the testimony of outsiders who have studied them. Nothing so bad but has in it some elements of good and in the same manner Urdu is not without elements of a higher and nobler kind in its nature and, if duly taken care of, can be turned to as good an advantage as anything else, though at present its worth is not fully recognised.

In the first place it is to its poetry that the objection of dealing too much with خال سیہ and زلف مشکیں [dark moles and musk-odoured locks], applies, and Urdu literature is not all poetry. It can boast of prose as well which in its best specimens is as good as that of any other language. Moreover Urdu poetry is not all what some of its accusers allege it to be and what some consider it without so much as examining its worth. Taking for instance the famous Lucknow poet Mir Insha Ulla Khan *Insha*, who, perhaps, may be adduced as typical of the objectionable side of Urdu poetry, I ask, can his famous *gazal* which has a history of its own and in morality of tone, purity of diction, pathos and effect ranks with the highest in Urdu, be ignored or lost sight of because the same author happened to speak pretty often of wine and sweethearts according to the tastes of the age in which he lived ? The story connected with that piece of poetry is commonly known, and scarcely needs repetition, but for the benifit of those present here who might not understand the allusion I will give it briefly.

Picture to yourself the grandeur of the durbar of a Muhammadan Prince in India before the time when the love of magnificence of the East had been marred by the influence of the West, and think yourself seated in the presence of Nawab Saadat Ali Khan of Oudh. You see approaching a portly gentleman, gorgeously clad, in the height of fashion of an Oriental courtier and the rest of the courtiers paying respect to him. The Nawab himself receives him in an affable and kind manner. This man whom we behold is the poet and the minister of the Court, the right hand of the Nawab and has more access to him than any body else. He can see the Nawab even when sitting with his Begams in the Zenana. Elephants, horses and steeds belonging to the Nawab throng in his stables and unbounded is the influence and wealth he owns. But alas! the instability of the things of this world and of the disposition of Oriental despotic rulers.

You can no longer be in the midst of this pomp and magnificence. The scene changes. Come with me if you have the heart to do so. There a friend of Mir Insha Ullah Khan is going to see him and perchance you may like to see him once more. Well then, let us follow the visitor.

The friend enters a street, pauses, looks about and is bewildered, turns back and again seems to recollect something by association as it were and back he goes again, stops at a house, looks at the surroundings and at last knocks at the door. No voice. "Perhaps, Mir Sahib has left the house for another one," he exclaims almost audibly. "I have come here after several years." He turns back again to go away when a thought suddenly flashes across his mind and he gives another louder knock, a second and a third. At last comes a feeble voice from inside.

بھیا کون ہو؟ اندر کے دالان میں ہیں—اور میں
ننگے سر ہوں—اگر ضروری کام ہے تو آنکھیں بند کر کے
گزر جاؤ *

It was the wife of the once rich poet who spoke, and who now described herself as without a covering for her head.*

Bewildered and astonished the gentleman heaves a long sigh as he passes in, with his head cast down and his eyes fixed on the ground.

Near a large heap of ashes, sits a lean, haggard-looking man, his body besmeared with ashes just like a Hindu Jogi, with his head resting on his knees.

"Mir Insha," cries the friend in an agitated voice, "What does all this mean ; am I not dreaming ?"

After repeated voices from the friend the down cast head is at last raised and a tear tricles down from the eye which had become almost dry by weaping constantly, and the friend weeps bitterly. After a sympathic conversation between the two, the friend makes mention of a *mushaira* or poetical contest about to take place and departs.

The old tendency again takes possession of the poet and you see him one day walking out of his house like a spectre with a bag round his neck and in that bag a little *huqqa*. He reaches the place where the contest is to be held. No one recognises the man who used once to be the hero of such meetings. He asks for a little fire to smoke his *huqqa* and his request is rejected, but some one happens to recognise the voice of the long-forgotten Mir Insha-ulla Khan and he offers him his *huqqa* and

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* The authenticity of this story has been questioned by *Mirza Auj*, son of *Dabir* of Lucknow, in a pamphlet published to refute the theory that *Insha* was ever reduced to poverty.

asks him to sit on the *masnad*, which offer he declines with thanks. Remonstrance with him is in vain. Though the people are not yet all assembled, he insists on reading his *gazal* and then he pours forth this effusion from his heart, better than all that he had written before, a monument which will last for ever, if people do not let Urdu die by their neglect :—

کمر باندھے ہوئے چلنے کو یاں سب یار بیٹھے ہیں
بہت آگے گئے باقی جو ہیں تیار بیٹھے ہیں
نہ چھیڑ اے نکہت باد بہاری راہ لگ اپنی
تجھے اٹھکیلیاں سوجھی ہیں ہم بیزار بیٹھے ہیں
بھلا گردش فلک کی چین دیتی ہے کسے انشا
غنیمت ہے کہ ہم صورت یہاں دو چار بیٹھے ہیں

Now I repeat the question, are these lines to be lost, because of some others to which he gave expression ? If Urdu contains verses which the present taste depises as useless, the same contains verses which deserve to be written in letters of gold, to guide the Indian youth through difficult crisis in life, to console him in trouble and to furnish an innocent pleasure for his leisure moments.

With special reference to students it is argued that now-a-days English is the most important subject of study and a tendency to read Urdu ought not to be generated or indulged in as it interferes with the more important study of English. I admit the importance of studying English. You cannot overestimate its importance, neither can you read it too much. The more you make progress in English the better for the community at large. It is so indispensible now-a-days that without its knowledge one cannot enjoy being in a country under the influence of English civilization. You cannot get fresh news, hear good speakers and talk with your rulers or with foreign travellers. English, in short, is indispensible and I do not mean at all to encourage Urdu reading among students at the expence of the study of

English. But those of you who can ought to manage to save a little time from your immediate duty and snatch occasionally an hour or half an hour for the language of your country. Having said so much to interest you in my subject I proceed to consider the various headings in which I divided the subject in the beginning.

The basis of Urdu language, like English, is a dialect of the Aryan family of language known as Bhasha, which is derived from Sanskrit. When the Moguls took possession of Northern India, and a large number of Mohammadan conquerors settled here, naturally the language of both began to have a mutual influence. When the Persian and Turkish speaking Mohammadan met the Hindu in mart, in camp, or in battlefield, the former in order to make himself understood had to use a mixed dialect, as he had naturalised some words of the language of the Hindu. The Hindu on the other hand had adopted some of the expressions of the conquering people. For instance the Hindu had changed the Persian بار into بہار while the Tartar had derived سیدھا from the Hindi سدہ The Tartar pronounced the Hindi ست as سچ If the Hindu had naturalised the Persian تن and دولت the Mohammadan had adopted دھن and من

This process continued, till the time of the Emperor Shahjahan, when we find in his *Urdu, i. e.*, army, spoken a dialect which was essentially the same as the language we are now treating of, and hence its name. Urdu properly so called began with the time of Shahjahan. First of all the language, though interspersed with Persian, contained more of Bhasha, and even now sometimes poets use that old form with great effect. Zafar deserves a special mention among those who have used that simple dialect with success.

Then by and by as people began to study Persian

and Arabic, foreign words began to be appropriated in hundreds, until the language was quite saturated with them. This was in Urdu literature exactly what the Johnsonian period was in English literature. Mirza Ghalib of Delhi furnishes the best example of those who used this form of Urdu very often, though of course sometimes he wrote simple verses which are unparalleled in their beauty. The following two verses of his will illustrate the point :—

شب خمار شوق ساقی رستخیز اندازہ تھا
تا محیط بادہ صورتخانۂ خمیازہ تھا
پوچھ مت رسوائی انداز استغنائے حسن
دست مرہون حنا رخسارہ رہن غازہ تھا

These verses could well have taken their place in a Persian collection, had it not been for one or two words. Ghalib not only used Persian words where he could not find a Hindi one but used foreign words even where he could have easily found a simple one. In the last of the above lines, instead of دست he might have said هاتھ without injuring the metre, but the fact was that Mirza Ghalib was a very learned man, and Persian and Arabic words came to him very naturally, but for the people he was difficult to understand. Zauq notwithstanding his not being really as great a poet as Ghalib, enjoyed more popularity for his simplicity. It is hardly forty years, however, that Ghalib lived and during this short space of time a great change has again come over the literature and tastes of the Urdu reading public in this country. Poetry now is simple and prose simpler still. You all know what this is due to. This is due to our coming in contact with the English. Not only has our language been enriched with about two hundred words from the English language— words which ew use every day without the least idea that they are

foreign—such as school, college, master, station office, ball, bat, cricket, match, court, General, Colonel and so on, but it is also unconsciously receiving the impress of English style, of English simplicity, even of English mode of thought. The old tendency for euphemistic writing is gradually giving way to a simpler and more natural form of expression and it is fortunate that it is doing so.

I will now mention the various kinds of compositions that are to be found in Urdu literature. Literature in the widest sense of the term means the whole written thought of a nation, but in its restricted sense it has come to mean only *belles lettres* or polite literature. But I shall speak of the following under this head:—Poetry, (*Ghazal Qasida, Marsia*) Prose, (Romance, Novel, Essay, Biography, History, Journals and Periodicals).

All of you know that true poetry under the present notions is something different from what it was believed to be in former times and *Ghaza*l, unless under very special circumstances, falls far short of the thing required. I, though an admirer of every sort of poetry, even of *Ghazal*, cannot shut my eyes to the fact that a *Ghazal* often has very little real substance, is nothing but a rhapsody produced by a quick succession of unconnected ideas and can simply serve the purpose of amusement. Terefore, excepting those who have gone far in their عمر to recede, I do not think it very appropriate for general students of Urdu. Some extracts of good verses ought to be made for them. As to the authors who have distinguished themselves in this branch of poetry, I may mention that Mir is at the head of them all and is regarded by them as a master of this style. The chief among this class after Mir are Insha, Atish, Mushafi, Nasikh, Jurat, Dard, Momin, Ghalib, Zauq, and

Zafar, and among the living ones the laureate is Nawab Mirza Khan *Dagh* who combines simplicity with richness of thought. Maulvi Altaf Husain *Hali*, and Amir Ahmad Minai, *Amir* of Lucknow are others who may be classed in the first rank of living poets. But India swarms at the present day with poetasters who walk over the same beaten track as these great men have trodden. Their occupation is neither of profit nor pleasure except to themselves.

The odes or قصائد also are not the best specimens of our literature. They are often too exaggerated and far surpass reality and, therefore, they too are generally, if not in a modified style, repugnant to the prevailing taste. I am glad to tell you that a distinguished graduate of the Aligarh College, whose name I shall mention later on and whom the Urdu reading portion of you probably know, has very successfully given a sample of beauty and force coexisting with simplicity in Urdu odes. For instance he begins his ode to the Mausoleum at Agra with the following eloquent and forcible lines.

کچھ بتا احوال دل اے منزل خامش زبان
کیوں نظر آتا ھے وحشت خیز تیرا آستان
گنبد گردون سے ٹکراتا ھے کیون تیرا نشان
کیا سناتی ھے اسے کچھ درد دل کی داستان
یا بگوشش شکوہ ھاے بیوفائی میکنی
وز ندیمان کہن یاد جدائی میکنی

Another important division of Urdu poetry is *Marsia*. It is most sadly neglected by the general Urdu reader and yet it perhaps deserves best to be studied. It has no objectionable elements in it. The *salam* and *rubaiyat* that precede in it contain a good many terse, epigrammatic sayings, and at least the *rubaiyat* more than repay a perusal to everybody with any taste for Urdu.

There is another kind of *Marsia* strictly speaking, but not technically. Poems relating to the present, the past and the future of our nation are called. قومی مرثیہ and are written in the مسدس style. The leader of this kind of writing is Hali. Mirza Arshed of Punjab fame also writes in the same style. This is a kind of poetry at once useful, soul-stirring and pleasant, and I recommend the writings of Hali and Arshed to those who have not yet read them. They will benefit by them in every way.

As to prose, the earliest writings in it are romantic tales—tales dealing with talismans and sorceries, now-a-days affording neither pleasure nor profit; therefore, it is not necessary to dwell upon them. Though one cannot help praising imaginations which produced fourteen large volumes of داستان امیر همزه or طلسم هوش ربا—بوستان خیال etc., yet I regard them as much energy lost. Moreover they are written in a style now out-of-vogue.

The branch of prose writings which requires the greatest consideration is modern fiction. Novels are largely read and have a good deal of influence on the mind, for good or for bad, according to their nature and merits. Of all the novels recently published, the most instructive and useful I regard those by Maulvi Nazir Ahmad, who uses often the language which is spoken in Hindustani homes, yet he sometimes introduces his learning and makes his style a little too heavy. His novels are mostly without any plots and are not of the strictest English fashion, yet they all have a certain end in view. His worth is sufficiently recognised, but it will be more so after him. Next to him comes a writer, who has adopted the manner of English novelist, and has produced several interesting novels the best of which is عزیز اور ور جنا the first that establish-

ed his fame. I refer to Sharar, and our literature owes him a great deal. Several others have followed his example but they have not achieved much. Another novelist who deserves mention is Pt. Ratan Nath, a voluminous writer. His books are undoubtedly interesting and instructive, but owing to the profuseness of his style, they contain an alloy of inferior matter also. But I believe this is not a satisfactory progress in novels, nor are all that are produced readable and useful. The style now in vogue is excellent but the subject matter ought to be improved. Novels describing country life and simple scenes, painting men and manners, ought to come out instead of those dealing with battle-fields and bloodshed. People ought to be able to see themselves as in a mirror and by seeing their own defects placed in a position to improve themselves. Let us hope that a time will come when this ideal will be realised.

There are very few essays and letters in Urdu literature. It is only in modern times that attempts have been made at these things with a pretty large amount of success. M. Nazir Ahmed, Maulvi Zaka-Ulla, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, M. Muhammad Hussain and several others have got letters, essays or lectures which repay perusal. Letters especially of Maulvi Nazir Ahmad to his son are the best among modern productions. Among the comparatively ancient writers Mirza Ghalib ranks highest and his letters in literary merit are far superior to those of any body else. We ought however to have more of these productions. Maulvi *Azad* under this heading deserves a special mention. Whatever the Punjabi knows of Urdu he owes it to *Azad*. He is one of the best of our prose-writers. He has done more to bring about the present state of literature than anybody else. He has infused a new spirit in Urdu literature. He showed what a man who possesses the advantage of

English education, in addition to Oriental knowledge, might do to enrich his language Notwithstanding his absolute want of a knowledge of English he produced his *Nairang-i-khyal* which may be termed a series of essays in imitation of the allegoric Greek style. He probably owed the suggestion to Dr. Leitner, but the plan of the book, the thought and language are his own and the book is written in his raciest vein. You cannot read that book without being benefitted by it.

Now I come to the most important and still the most abused branch of this literature. I refer to Journalism. Sorry to say very few vernacular papers have yet understood what the duties and responsibilities of a journalist are. There is not a single vernacular paper throughout India which fulfils all the requirements of a good and really useful paper.

None so perfect but some defect in it
Quarrels with the noblest grace it owns
And puts it to the foil.

Properly speaking there is no periodical literature here. The newspapers deem it their duty to write libelous articles, to give currency to false, unfounded, unauthenticated news, and to fill their columns with rude, vulgar and obscene jests, and thus pervert and vitiate the tastes of their readers. We lack monthly or weekly journals or magazines to deal with important literary subjects. The only monthlies* we have are three or four collections of verses recited in

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*The *dilgudaz* which was a monthly magazine of a higher type had become extinct after a short existence at the time of writing the above. It is a pleasure to note that Maulvi Abdul Halim *Sharar*, its able and talented editor has again issued it from Hyderabad. Another magazine, deserving of commendation, the *Maarif* has recently been started at Aligarh under the editorship of Haji Muhammad Ismail Khan and Maulvi Wahid-ud-Din *Salim*. (Since writing the above monthly journalism made great progress. The *Makhzan*, the *Adib*, the *Zamana*, the *Kahkashan* and many others came into existence between 1900 and 1920. The latest addition to literary monthlies is the *Shabab-i-Urdu*).

poetical contests such as the پیام یار-فتنۂ-گلچین etc., which except for a few lines occasionlly are not even entertaining, not to speak of doing any good. Of Biography* we have very little and History† we almost entirely want.

You have seen what your language contains, how it originated and progressed, what it is now, and the only thing now remaining to be discussed is what it ought to be and what means ought to be adopted in order to make it reach that standard. There might be chances of its gradual decline, if you were to contiue indifferent towards it. But there is no doubt that it has made satisfactory progress hitherto. The English language has reached its present standard after more than a thousand years of slow gradual development. Our language is quite an infant compared to English and when we see all that it has achieved, we are apt to think that great results are reserved for it by Providence. It is constructed on the same basis as English, can admit foreign words, assimilate foreign idioms and oppropriate foreign thoughts, and has all the elements of a wide language. Do not be narrow minded and say that it contains nothing, or nothing that will suit you. The work of each of the old writers has been his own, shaped by his own individuality, tinged often by the circumstances of his own life, coloured still more by the spirit of the age in which he lived. What you have got to do is to study the old writings and produce things which would be in harmony with the spirit of your age. Chaudhri Khushi Muham-

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*Since writing the above some progress has been made in the direction of biographies. Maulvi Hali, who had already given us "Life of Saadi," contributed other valuable additions to our literature by a "Life of Ghalib," and a "Life of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan," *Almamoun* of Maulvi Shibli is a work of great historical as well as biographical value. The latest of Shibli's works is the *Siratan Nabi* or the Life of the Prophet.

†We can now claim at least on historical work of great value in Urdu the History of India by Maulvi Zaka-Ullah, in ten volumes

mad, a clever graduate of the Aligarh College, to whom I alluded before, is a Punjabi gentleman, who has set an example before you and showed that it is quite possible for a College student to know Urdu well with English and other subjects of study fixed by the Universities. If he goes on, I believe, he will make a fine example of a writer in a pure and simple style. A poem recently written by him in imitation of Thomson's Seasons ought to be read by every one who can get hold of it.

Indian gentlemen with high education ought to rise and try to purify and improve their language, to edit journals and magazines in it, to give a new life to its fiction, to improve its essays, to write biographies of their great men in their mother-tongue, to translate* or adapt useful books from other languages in short to enrich Urdu in every way they can.

When these few old men who now use Urdu with effect are taken away from us, what preneration have we made to repair the loss? The following lines deserve to be taken to heart:—

The voices of our fathers gone before,
Stay here to help us with their magic thus;
What voices of ours abiding ever more,
Shall help the dear ones who come after us?

I do not mean to hint that all of you are to become authors. Nothing would be more injurious than this. What I mean is that those of you who really have a taste for literature ought to take advantage of it, and not to think that you will not get anything by engaging in the pursuit of Urdu

*Under this head the translation of the highly valuable French work of Dr. Le Boun on the Civilisation of the Arabs, by Shams-ul-ulama Maulvi Sayed Ali Bilgarmi of Hyderabad, deserves special mention. It is an ideal of what sort of works should be translated by educated aspirants of literary fame and of what should be the quality of those translations

literature. There is always room at the top, and India stands badly in need of good vernacular journalists, essayists or orators, and any one who accomplishes something really substantial in these directions will not have reason to repent his efforts.

THE WRITINGS OF HALI *

کوئی محرم نہیں ملتا ہے محرم راز

مجھے کہنا ہے کچھ اپنی زبان میں

The significant line from the pen of the distinguished writer whose works are to furnish the subject of this evening's discourse expresses exactly the state of mind in which I was when I took up pen to write this paper. Were it not for the possession which that state of mind had taken of me I would fain have refrained from attempting the risky business of criticising a living writer of Maulvi Altaf Husain Hali's position and ability. Interesting as literary criticisms may be to some minds, I, for one, have no unmixed admiration for them, as critics in general, who sit on judgment on men far abler than themselves in every respect, retard instead of advancing the progress of true learning. Good criticism is as rare as good writing. There are those who understand by criticism the ability to pick as many holes as possible, to expose the flaws and to hide the beauties of a literary work There are others who, being admirers of a writer, will hold up everything of his as perfect. The position of a just critic, however, is truly critical. He is sure to give offence to passionate admirers for not admiring to the same extent that they do, and he is sure to lose

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* Read at the young men's Muhammadan Association, Lahore, in 1896 and published in the *Punjab Observer* of the 16th May.

the good graces of opponents for thinking the man capable of even the slightest good ; and if, to add to his other difficulties, the subject of his criticism is a living writer, ten to one he is sure to displease the auther himself, who, of course, liking, nay loving, his own productions, is resentful if any of them are made light of. What, then, has led me, inspite of my conciousness of the above difficulties to attempt an estimate of Hali's writings is that very feeling to which I have referred, of finding a few sympathetic souls who could feel just the same way about Hali and his work as I do, who could be called محرم راز, that is capable of understanding the language of my heart, and if by this ventilation of my views I succeed in causing even one heart to appreciate Hali as he ought to be appreciated, or if one heart goes home this evening thinking better of Urdu poetry and modern poets than before, I will not repent having run the risk of incurrying the displeasure of some parties.

A biographical sketch is, of course, beyond my scope at present, as a record of Hali's life is not yet ready ; but also because he has hardly been a man of action, and consequently the story of his uneventful life cannot present anything more than an account of careful application to work, steady efforts after attainment of learning, a youth of continued routine work for making a living, enlivened occasionally by flights into the higher atmosphere of poetry, a strong feeling for the good of his community all the time engaging his innermost thoughts, an old age crowned with comforts and the satisfaction of well-earned fame, and his touch with the still more patriotic and strong mind of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan to whom he had been attracted by affinity. These few words might well summarise the whole course of a quiet, peace-loving life. As to those details which form

the beauty and perfection of English books on biography, it is a pity we have no material for them here in India. The day is yet distant when India shall produce Boswells to follow at the heels of our Johnsons, to put in black and white every utterance of a great man, and to leave a permanent record for posterity. No one, for instance, unless he himself would feel inclined to do so, can give us those little details of Hali's life which are the secret of interest in reading about the lives of others, those touches of nature which make the whole world kin and lead our hearts to beat in union with that of the man whom we read about.

Thus I can do no more than introduce Maulvi Hali to you as a writer, in which capacity my acquaintance with him is of pretty long standing, and justifies the liberty I am going to take with him; and we will try to see the man through the writer. Belonging to Panipat, Hali spent most of his early life at Delhi, and there had the privilege of coming in touch with one of the greatest masters of Urdu language and style. Mirza Asad-Ullah Khan *Ghalib* was not a character whose personality could be easily effaced from the mind of anyone who once came in contact with him, and he has left a stamp on the temper of his distinguished pupil and friend. I say pupil and friend, because the relations of Ghalib with his pupils, unlike the usual custom of Oriental poets, were friendly, and more so with Hali. Hali, though recognising him as one of the greatest masters of Urdu verse, and acknowledging him as such was no less valued by the master himself. Excellance, as a rule, can never be satisfied to remain unappreciated, and therefore can by no means be indifferent to true admiration. Ghalib, too, atonce found the promise of future greatness in Hali's looks, and knew, by instinct as it were that he was a born poet, and was as fond of him as

if he were the gainer by the intercourse. It gave him a pleasure to recite his compositions—I could hardly call them compositions, but out-flowings of his nature—to Hali, and to read admiration and appreciation written in his face. On occasions of his visits to Ghalib, Hali for the first time seriously tried his hand at writing *Ghazals*, with pretty fair success, and got them improved by artistic touches from his pen. What his *ghazals* then were it is difficult to ascertain, but it is probable that he indulged in the free venting of pent-up ideas of all kinds like others, and yielded to none of his position in this respect. In recently giving his collection to the public he has marked some *ghazals* as belonging to those days, but it is impossible that he could have given all to the public. He has given only those which, according to his present ideas of fitness and propriety, might find a place in his *Diwan*, and seems to have carefully shut out those representing the older strain. The germs of poetry thus developed in so genial an atmosphere as Delhi, with Ghalib in it, were destined to bud and put forth shoots, and even to give fruit under the invigorating sunshine of Syed Ahmad Khan's inflence. In fact, the best and most memorable work of Hali is so blended with the history of Sir Syed's work that a word or two regarding him cannot be out of place here. Sir Syed, though memorable as a socio-religious reformer, will be more immortalised as the pioneer of education among the Muhammadans, because his services, though questioned in some quarters in the former respect, are admitted on all hands in the latter. Not only has he been the pioneer of English education, but he has championed Urdu literature as well, and our language owes him a debt of gratitude which will be remembered as long as it lasts. He did not simply furnish us with valuable essays on moral social and religious subjects but set others a working

to enrich our literature. Most of the writings of Hali, Nazir Ahmad and Zaka-Ullah would have been nowhere had there been no Syed Ahmad. So coming in contact with this great man another side of Hali's nature began to open out. Patriotism, which is the God-given gift of every poetic soul, nay of every true heart, generally gets stifled in some for want of congenial influence for its development. Hali must have possessed a good deal of it, ready waiting for the moment it was needed, and the touch of Sir Syed acted just like a lighted match to a train of gunpowder. Out burst the innermost heart of the poet in strains unheard of before, yet so beautiful, so touching, so mournful, so rousing, so truely poetical, that for once at least they roused even the most lethargic of the Muhammadan community from their sleep. I am sure you understand what I refer to. Even now I could feel a thrill passing through some of you present here at the very mention of that wonderfully sincere poem the مسدس We read it in our school-days, we read it when we grow up, we recite it in our clubs, we listen to it in our Anjumans, we see the best of the land recurring to it in our conferences, we hear it sung with music and without it, again and again and aga'n, and yet without a trace of weariness. Monotony seems to have made an exception in its effect in this particular case, as with our poet in his fondness of recurring to the subject of the condition of his قوم each and every moment.

I have seen men, destitute of principle, almost dead to a sense of religion or brotherly feeling, and given up entirely to pleasure seeking, who used to avoid the mention of sorrow in their pleasure meetings and abused the singers if they happened to sing a mournful piece, letting the مسدس pass without objection and finding a pleasure in weeping while it was recited. I have observed our fellow-

countrymen of other faiths being melted to tears, genuine because spontaneous, by its pathos. I have heard the harshest critics of Hali acknowledging his superiority in the مسدس The most unmistakable sign of all is that no meeting now-a-days among us is complete without compositions in imitation of Hali, and that some of the best hands among us are trying to reach as near him as possible, of course taking it for granted that we can never hope to excel him, in this line at least. To prove the truth of any statements regarding the style of a book, it is necessary that specimens from it should be given to enable the audience to judge for itself, but I believe the مسدس must remain an exception to this rule also. Its worth is so universally admitted, and its verses so well-known to you all, that I shall not take up your time in quoting from it.

I feel bound, however, to remark in passing that in thus giving the credit of the inspiration to such an extent to Sir Syed as I have, I am not detracting in the least from the service done by our worthy poet in giving this work to the public. This alone has been one of the chief instruments of influencing Musalmans. It must be freely acknowledged that this band of energetic old workers for the good of our community is as connected together as if they were members of one body, all going together to make a perfect existence and each defective without the other. There would have been no Hali and Nazir Ahmad and Zaka-Ullah had there been no Sir Syed, as I remarked; but it is equally true that without them Sir Syed would never have achieved what he has been the moving power, but they have been the most useful instruments. But this is by the way.

For a long time after this Hali wrote very little, except occasional small poems for special occasions. His increased fame, however, brought with it increas-

ed responsibilities. Before this he was a comparatively unknown man, his poetic genius unrecognised except by his immediate acquaintances, as but few of his verses had been printed before. But this exalted poem gave distinct proof of genius and power, and people began to form all sorts of expectations. Some who had been taken by surprise by a successful rival in the world of poets began to expect that as a poet he would give them a challenge on their own ground. He would enter the arena of writing *ghazals*, and *qasidas*, and *masnavis*, some of them thought. But Hali did nothing of the kind. He kept quiet over remarks to the effect that he was unable to write *ghazals*, or would fail even if he attempted them; having all along a distinct idea of his own, careless of the rest. He saw that the *ghazal*, in spite of its manifold attractions, was not the thing just wanted by the country, but was more likely to be injurious to the youth of the land began to think of reforming our poetry. After years of continuous thought he has at last produced a book, giving his ideal of a poet in prose, and accompanied by illustrations of his ideal in a collection of poems. "*The Diwan-i-Halli*." I call this book an epoch-making book. I feel that it is destined some day to be recognised as the book marking the epoch when Urdu poetry shook off the trammels of convention by which it was bound and began to soar higher than the limits prescribed for it by a characteristically conservative people. But let us see what has been its present fate. Its merit is denied by the majority of the Urdu-knowing public who are quite ignorant of English and conservative in their tastes of Urdu poetry, Even the English-knowing few have not all come forward to appreciate it. Those among them who, dazzled on the one hand by the purity and high moral tone of modern English poetry, which is the only one they have

generally access to, and filled with aversion by the degradation to which some poetasters are taking our poetry, have given Urdu up as a useless waste of time and have never condescended to look at Hali, and these form no minority. It is a pity that our young men forget the value of poetry in forming national character, and giving a feeling of unity and strength inspired by common possession. In England there is as much diversity of sects in religion and as great difference of parties in politics as anywhere else, yet the nation is united in its esteem of its great poets and authors. Had we such an appreciation of real and true poetry in our land, had we some names among our writers commanding universal honour, had we any national poets and national poetry, the great question to-day of union between Hindus and Muslims would have been a solved problem. The moment you find a man admiring the same man whom you admire or having the same tastes as yours, or the same antipathies with you, or at one with you on any one point, you feel strongly attracted towards him and for the time forget all points of difference. It would therefore have been infinitely better if our Hindu friends, instead of taking it into their heads to pay more attention to reviving Sanskrit and corrupting and weaking Urdu by administering to it undigestible doses of Hindi and Bhasha, had lent their efforts to promoting Urdu, and thus establishing at least one common platform for all classes of Her Majesty's Indian subjects to shake hands together.

Leaving aside this tempting question we find that even those of our educated countrymen who still retain some taste for Urdu literature have not all given Hali his due. I have known several gentlemen, for whose talents and sound judgment I have the highest respect who confessed to me that they had not intentionally read the *Diwan*, as they

hardly expected Hali to write good *ghazals*, but have been afterwards agreeably surprised to find in it much worth admiring. In the case of the *Diwan* it has been with Hali as with Wordsworth— "Select audience find, though few." In spite of all this unpromising beginning there is that in his verse which shows that it is wonderfully adapted to the times, and rise it must, no matter when. I will briefly discuss the changes which he has introduced in his own verse and wishes to introduce in general. The first necessary qualification of poetry, according to him, is its capacity to move the heart, and in his lines addressed to poetry he has shown that he fully realises the difficulties which the acceptance of his ideal will involve for the public, yet, confident of the usefulness of his plan, he is determined to act up to it at any cost :—

اے شعر دل فریب نہو تو تو غم نہین
پر تجھپہ حیف ہے جو نہو دلگداز تو
صنعت پہ ہو فریفتہ عالم اگر تمام
هان سادگي سے آئیو اپنے نہ باز تو

[Charm the heart thou may not O Muse! but move it thou must as thy prime duty. If the whole of the world admire thy arts, let artless simplicity be thy chief concern].

This ideal he has fully carried out in his latest compositions. Poetry cannot move the heart unless possessed of the beauties detailed in the above lines, unless it be true to nature, unartificial, simple in thought as well as in language. Besides this change in the essence, Hali has introduced another change in the form. He has got rid of the conventional rule that the *ghazals* ought to be composed of several couplets, each couplet with a distinct idea, and has produced *ghazals* containing one and the same thought all through. He has shown that قافیہ and ردیف are unnecessary shackles, preventing that

freedom of expression which is the essential feature of poetry. As long as one cares for قافیہ he has to search up the قافیہ first and to fit an idea afterwards into it, which is quite the reverse of the natural process; poetry ought to be nothing but "impassioned thought in numbers." To crown all this he has adopted the novel method of administering advice by means of *ghazals* which used to contain anything but monitory injunctions. He is right in doing so as he knows how effective a line giving an excellent bit of advice can be when thrown in as it were by chance among other pleasantries, and by this means a bitter medicine is unconsciously swallowed which alone could never have been, but he has been very much taken to task for it by the representatives of the old school, especially by the conservative Lucknowites. Their indignation, however is also excusable, as radical a change to those who are used to the old state of things cannot but be disagreeable. As time lapses on people will become more accustomed to it and will perhaps not feel so much about it.

One other marked feature of this *Diwan* is that every now and then, as it were unconsciously or without being able to help it, Hali falls into the mournful bewailing of the fate of the community, which one might excuse, or even commend in him, but which should scarcely be adopted as a model by our young aspirants, as it would be but tame imitation and very easy to do, and hence would even destroy any originality they might by nature possess. It is allowable in his case, as he is so totally occupied and mastered by that one idea that he can find no room for other thoughts.

His *ghazals* in the *Diwan* may be divided into two classes. First those which have been produced after the reform idea got into his head in which he has tried to act upto the rules laid down by himself.

Secondly, those produced before this, which even, as I said before, seem to have been selected according as they approached the new ideal. We would take first the earlier ones. Among them will be found lines which deserve pretty high estimation even according to the old school tests and which show that had he persisted in that line, or had not purposely avoided it, perhaps at great sacrifice of his inclinations, he might have vied with the best. Simplicity of course is the predominant feature in both cases. In fact in his new verses he has carried it to an extreme, while in the earlier ones it is mingled with a certain raciness which has a charming effect.

(The lecturer here illustated the above statements by quotations from the new as well as the old *ghazals* of Hali, drawing a line of comparison between the two and then went on as follows:)

You can, however, gather nothing of his value from so meagre a number of detached lines as I have presented, and can only realise his sublimity if you read him for yourself.

Hali has also attempted prose, but it does not seem to be his special line. He is essentially a poet by nature, and a poet he must content himself to be acknowledged. One of his prose works is a life of Sadi, and another attempt at prose is in the مقدمہ of the *Diwan* itself which covers more than two hundred pages. It is correct, idomatic, simple prose, and this is all that I can say of it. It has nothing of the racy, brusque and piquant style of Azad's prose, nor can it pretend to the quaint humour and versatility of Maulvi Nazir Ahmad. His prose works are valuable indeed in their own way, but more for their matter than for the outward form in which they are clothed. In his "Life of Sadi" he has to the best of his ability tried to supply a distinct

want, while in the مقدمہ he has fully explained what true poetry is, and in doing so has done a service to literature for which we cannot be thankful enough. He has furnished the Urdu-reading public with something which was beyond the reach of the majority, that is, ideas of Arabian poets, of the Greeks, and of the English as to what constitutes poetry. A new life can be infused into our language if our educated men with better advantages and knowledge of English were to take up Hali's suggestions and provide for their brethren translations or adaptations of stores of western learning. This مقدمہ of Hali's more than anything else goes to show how deeply he has studied the folk lore of our country, ancient and modern, and how well he can appreciate even the old school, and that it is not for want of taste or inclination that he has struck a new path, but on purpose, for what he regards the good of his country. [His latest prose work is a biography of Ghalib and a critism of his Urdu and Persian works, which is a valuable addition to the store of Urdu literature, and the portion of which dealing with criticism, must be studied with special care by all anxious to understand Ghalib. He has also written a life of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, which is probably the best of his prose works.

As to his position as a poet, it is a question by no means easy to be decided. If a truly poetic heart be the criterion of excellence, and if natural and spontaneous flow of verse be the mark of distinction, Hali yields to none in the land of the living, but if, as agreed upon all over India, we regard the capacity of writing in the hundred different little varieties of poetry, possessing something in each, and dealing in artificialities and metaphors, as necessary qualifications for a poet, then I am afraid his claims will be only second-rate.

Whether his writings will be regarded as classics in the language, can only be decided by time, but they possess one sure and unmistakable sign of having that fortune. You will notice in almost all languages that the proverbs, the household words of every language, are taken from its standard writers, and the writer who presents more detachable lines excels others generally in popularity. You will find this true in the case of Hafiz and Sadi in Persia, and in that of Shakespeare in England. Judged by this standard Hali again claims a place among the best, even inclusive of the ancients, for almost every verse of his new *Diwan* seems to be fitted for a quotation, in a speech, talk or ecture. It is so easily detachable. It is so useful land full of practical lessons. His other charm of being true to nature I would illustrate by two quotations: one is a definition of *love*, one of the simplest, the truest, and the most natural that I have come across:—

عشق سنتے تھے جسے ہم وہ یہی ہے شاید
خود بخود دل میں ہے اک شخص سمایا جاتا

The other is a description of his feelings over his brother's death. (This was recited at the lecture but is too long to be quoted here.)

With these passages before you I leave you to decide whether Hali deserves to be classed among the highest of poets which India can boast of, and while admitting that on the whole he can not come up to some of the ancient names, he can quite hold his own in comparison with living authors and without exaggeration has the right to sing:

گو کہ حالی اگلے استادوں کے آگے ہیچ ہے
کاش ہوتے ملک میں ایسے ہی اب دو چار ہیچ

AZAD AND HIS WORKS.

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The name of the writer whose works are the subject of this evening's discourse hardly needs an introduction from me. Every young man in the Punjab, student or ex-student, has been familiar with it from the early part of his life, and that period of one's educational career in the Punjab with which the best memorable associations are connected is to a greater or a smaller extent associated with Maulvi Azad or his works. Outside the Punjab he is comparatively less known, or, if known, not sufficiently appreciated, for reasons which I will notice later on. But on the Punjab he has claims not only as an eminent writer who has exercised considerable influence on Urdu literature, but as one of the energetic band of pioneers of education in this Province, a co-worker with scholars like Dr. Leitner and Colonel Holroyd, and one of those chosen few who, though belonging to the old school of thought and brought up under the influence of ancient traditions, were acute enough to see the advantages of modern education, and did all they could to facilitate its spread. On Lahore especially he has still more particular claim, as this place has been the home of his adoption, the scene of his useful labours, and the centre of literary activity in the congenial atmosphere of which his best works were produced. It is fitting, therefore, that the Muhammadan Young Men's Association, Lahore, should pay him the tribute of including his name among the illustrious literary men of modern India on whose life and work it was

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* (A lecture at a meeting of the Muhammedan Young Men's Association, Lahore, on the 23rd October, 1893 reprinted from the *Punjab Observer* of the 31st idem.

proposed some time ago to have a series of lectures. The first of the series was a paper on the "writings of Hali," which also was entrusted to me. I am glad to notice that the theme now alloted to me admits of variety as compared with the former, and I will not have to say the same things over again inasmuchas the careers of the two authors differ materially from one another. I said in my last paper that Hali was essentially a poet and could lay but little claim to being an exceptionally excellent prose-writer. Maulvi Azad, on the other hand, is pre-eminently a prosewriter and cannot be ranked among the "masters of the realm of rhyme" in spite of the fact that he has some very creditable performances in poetry.

I find from the notices circulated that Mr. Secretary has, without consulting me, been allowing you to go under the impression that I propose considering Azad as a poet and a prose-writer. I should undeceive you at the start and declare that I intend to do nothing of that kind. He has not only imposed upon me the discussion of Azad's claims as a poet, as an extra burden which I neither meant nor mean to bear, notwithstanding his kind offices, but has fallen into the further mistake of regarding the word poet as necessarily a more important something than the word prose-writer and has made the one as naturally take precedence of the other as ladies now-a-days precede gentlemen laughter. It must not, however, be forgotten that every writer has his own strong points in which he is unequalled, and the moment he attempts to aspire beyond his *forte* he no longer remains a success. Thus it is no discredit to any author if we say of him that he is deficient in a particular line and excels in another. Alfred Lord Tennyson's attempts in prose are of no account, nor would his great contemporary, Thomas Carlyle, had been

of much importance as a poet even if he had wished to be, but the Sage of Chelsea was too wise to venture upon such a task. So I think that the proper sphere of Maulvi Azad is prose, and it is there that he shines with a lustre entirely his own. It must be admitted at the same time that Maulvi Azad is not a prose writer because he could not be a poet. He has been made what he is by the times in which his lot has been cast. I believe he would have distinguished himself equally as a poet had he been born a century earlier Brought up in Delhi at a time when the last representatives of Urdu poetry were still flourishing, when the public taste encouraged poetical contests, when Zauq and Ghalib fought for literary supremacy, with opportunities of associating with the best poets of the day and with a wild imagination which his looks even in his saner days betrayed, showing a temperament by nature poetical, Azad could not but have been a poet. He saw, however, that Urdu poetry, fettered with conventional shackles as it was, had reached its climax if the conventional limits were to be observed. He knew enough of the conservatism of his countrymen to foresee that any attempts to write independently of the conventions imposed, which was the only way in which some productions conforming to the modern needs could be given, would be discouraged and result in failure. Moreover, being gifted with a thorough appreciation of what were regarded excellences in ancient Urdu verse, and having all the feelings of an artist on the point, his own nature perhaps could not bear to do away with the fantastic crust which had with time gathered round the kernel of Urdu poetry. He found also that while hundreds of collections of poetical works in Urdu could easily be obtained, it was difficult to get even a single book of some literary merit in good Urdu prose in the easy language

spoken and understood by the people. A few stories, translations of the Qoran and the Hadis, or of medical books there were, but they too were written in style either too pedantic and high-sounding to be easily understood by ordinary men or too antiquated to be of any practical use. He, therefore, struck out for himself a new path and began to see what excellence Urdu prose was capable of. He found the ground receptive; the seeds which he and his eminent contemporaries having the same opinions as himself sowed seem to have flourished, and have yielded, and promise to yield in future, an ample harvest. The struggle with his own temperament required for striking out this new line must have been very great, the sacrifice of his own formed tastes remarkable, and the resolution to direct his faculties into an altogether new channel very strong. I would call such a sacrifice of personal inclinations for what one deems of use to his country and countrymen, a literary martyrdom—which phrase could fitly apply to Maulvi Azad, who sacrificed his health also to literary pursuits, and remained during his last days only a wreck of his former self. To this latter sacrifice, however, a detailed reference further on will be necessary; and we have in the meantime to discuss some of his writings.

I am sorry it is our misfortune in this country not to be possessed of materials to furnish accounts of the early life and culture of our distinguished men unless they themselves communicate facts to us, and this lack leaves sketches of this sort without their proper preludes incomplete. In our biographical sketches we are introduced to the man when he has entered on his life work, we are face to face with an accomplished fact, with a phenomenon of evolution without having the means of watching the extremely interesting process which

ended in the evolution, the steps which rendered the accomplishment of the fact possible and the influence which made the man. In the present case, for instance, I may, with some effort, succeed in bringing before you the portrait of a man of mature age, with a rather thick beard, medium or even short stature, in the simplest of dress with a *pugrie* betraying birth in a place where people do not burden themselves with it and wear only small light caps, chewing his betel-leaf while taking a long walk along one of your Lahore roads. I may even go further and make you imagine yourself listening to his talk, humorous and witty but at the same time polite, exciting laughther but at nobody's expense, or to his learned discourse in a serious mood of which he was as capable as the former. I may step further still and introduce you to the writer's sanctum and show him absorbed in his studies, poring over his books amid old and new manuscripts scattered around, and the end of his pen touching his lips. But how can I possibly bring before you the boy who became transformed into the man above described, the young looks which to observant eyes must have held forth promises of future genius, the frolics which called down wit and humour now so amusing, and the love for study which ripened into sound knowledge? If imagination can in any way make up for this lack you will not catch me sparing it. I have some belief in this method of supplying from imagination in special cases. One of the greatest modern naturalists, Count Cuvier, has achieved wonderful success in this respect. Give him the fossil of an animal belonging to an altogether defunct species and he will supply you with a detailed account of its physiology. His accounts have been verified in some cases by reference to old historical or legendry descriptions of animals of

former ages with which they tally sometimes to the letter. Well, with a Cuvier's observation one could easily tell what any one was like at particular period of his life. Having no pretension to any science of that sort we have to content ourselves with giving tone and colour to the hints dropped by Azad himself now and then regarding himself and rendering our picture approach completion as much as possible. We find from occasional references that the author's father was a gentleman of some learing and refined tastes, and was an admirer and friend of Sheikh Muhammad Ibrahim *Zauq*. The father seems to have taken considerable care in the early training of his son, as it is stated that the son was not allowed to go to *mushairas*, that is, the poetical contests, till he had reached a certain period of age, as going there could at best be an amusement. When a little advanced, the son began to accompany his father on visits to literary friends and to meetings of the kind alluded to. This partaking in such meetings and contact with the best writers of verse of his day, was an effectual finish to the grounding he had obtained in knowledge through paternal care. While still young he began to enjoy the influence of Zauq's company, who looked upon him as a promising and useful pupil always at hand, while he began to open his mind and store in it all he could of verses, ancient and modern, which he heard from his master, of traditions regarding old authors which were till then the legitimate inheritance of literary men and were communicated from teacher to pupil orally, and which proved of so great a use to Azad in his after-life. Naturally of an inquisitive disposition he seems to have been constantly pestering his renowned master with enquiries of all sorts, and receiving replies favourable and unfavourable according to the mood in which the

master happened to be at the time. He did not stop here. He scraped acquaintance with the old friends, companions and play-fellows of Zauq and his contemporaries, and kept listening attentively to the accounts of their friend which they related. His acquisitiveness did not even spare the old cook of his master, who, being an old servant of the family and as a Delhi man naturally interested in poetical contests, though illiterate, was fully acquainted with Zauq's attempts at versification as a boy, and remembered some verses which even Zauq had forgotten himself, or tried to forget, as he did not regard them as in conformity with his more advanced and developed notions of poetry. To Azad, however, every verse of his master possessed a special value, as he knew it would be useful as showing a contrast between his early and later stages. With the object of extracting something out of the old cook, Azad used to flatter him and to hover about him and to be at him in his leisure moments, and often succeeded in his object by importunity. One of his victories he triumphantly relates in his new edition of Zauq. I think you will like to see the trophy. A trophy it is, as in the whole of Zauq's collection we do not find a single verse in the vein in which the one described as extracted from the cook is written. It runs:

پیشانی انور پہ ہے جھو مر کا پڑا چاند
لا بوسہ چڑھے چاند کا وعدہ تھا چڑھا چاند

Having secured this verse, Azad did not rely on the sole authority of the old cook, but went to the author himself and reciting it before him asked if it was his. Zauq smiled and half unwilling admitted it to be his, perhaps out of delicacy, as the Indian notions of delicacy look upon the demand made in the verse as outstepping modesty. Making due allowance for the boyishness of the author

when he gave utterance to the line, it still deserves to be called a beautiful one. Returning to Azad, we see that even as a boy he lost no opportunity of supplementing his knowledge by facts, however small and with whatever difficulty obtained. Thus the early youth of Azad was spent till that unique historical occurrence, the breaking out of the Indian Mutiny, brought about an utter revolution in Delhi life; old houses were extinguished, families gone, the wealthy transformed into the needy, and on the other hand nobodies came to be regarded as somebodies. The old beloved Delhi, the sweet home of literature and art, the resort of the learned and the pious, the centre of the Mugal civilisation, no longer remained an abode for its old inhabitants. Some were turned out by circumstances over which they had no control, others left of their own accord as being unable to bear the sight of their beloved town in ruins and preferred voluntary exile to a house destitute of its attractions, and others again went forth in search of work and employment. Heart-rending as are the the details of this unparalleled calamity, still it had its uses. That some men whose energies would perhaps have got rusty in the conventional Delhi routine life of the times were put in circumstances where their hidden talents found ample exercise, is the least of those advantages. Had there been no Mutiny perhaps we would not have had the Azad we have.

Leaving aside a comparatively uneventful life before coming to Lahore, during which he occupied positions of small importance such as a teacher in military schools, etc; which gave no exercise to his abilities and provided no field for the display of his talents, let us come to Maulvi Azad's work in Lahore. He was probably among the batch of teachers aed educationalists who came in the train of Colonel Holroyd when he left the military for the

Education Department. The rest of his story as far as his service career is concerned does not take long to tell. Many of those present here this evening have watched his rise to a Professorship in the Local Government College, and many of the ex-students of that institution are personally acquainted with him and have the pleasantest recollections of his friendly treatment. But his life here gave him a scope to display his talents. First of all he was appointed by the Education Department to compile or make text-books for the Punjab public schools in Urdu and Persian. The 1st and 2nd books of Persian still current in schools are the result of his efforts and are really valuable for beginners. The 2nd book in Urdu, now almost extinct, and some other seletions were his compilations, while the *Qisas-i-Hind*, or the "Annals of India," has long remained and still continues to be one of the best text-books in Urdu. This brought him distinction. It was followed by more valuable productions. The most useful of his works, the *Ab-i-Hayat*, a sort of history of Urdu literature, was written during his Professorship here. To Persian literature also he made several contributions, the most useful of which was his book on Persian Grammar, which, being written immediately after his travels through Persia, was quite up to date, and treated also of certain departures from old rules of grammar. One of his excellences was his knowledge of modern Persian. He could weild a tongue in Persian, which with a screen between could hardly be distinguished from that of a native of Persia. His study of the Persian lore, ancient and modern was extensive, and it was this knowledge that made his travels through Persia interesting and successful. His thirst of knowledge did not leave him in his travels, and he is said to have brought back with him some very rare and valuable books from Persia, some of which would have seen

the light had his health allowed him to work.* This mention of travels puts me in mind of another phase of the man's character. He was as enduring, inured to hardship, and indifferent to bodily ease as a traveller can well be, and the curious thing about him is that he is said to have sometimes travelled in the garb of a *faqir*. Nobody will doubt that one can best enjoy travelling in this habit, uncurbed by formalities which cling to a man of acknowledged position and draw for him a line between legitimate and forbidden ground. A *faqir* is hampered by no such obstacles, and he can be as lithe in his movements as the birds of the air and as free of care as the lilies of the field, and can devote himself entirely to observation and experience of the strange lands he visits and the new sights that meet his eye. On return from his travels Azad entered again upon a career of usefulness and gave to the world his revised collection of Zauk with notes. While engaged on this work he gave out that he would establish a library open to the public. He did so and ungrudgingly placed his valuable store of books at the disposal of the public, and established also a reading-room in which people could read newspapers from all parts of India. His name, which, though well-known already, had increased in respect by the distinction conferred upon him on the occasion of the Jubilee of Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen-Empress of India, by granting to him the richly deserved title of Shams-ul-Ulema, attracted to him numerous visitors, whom he found time so to please as to send them home with the best of impressions about himself. But it pleased God to put an end to his usefulness at this stage of his life. Overwork and continuous strain on his brain

* One of the results of his research during his travels has been published in Lahore. The *Sukhandan-i-Paras* as the book is styled, is a valuable treatise on philology proving the identity of the origin of the Persian and the Sanskrit language.

undermined his intellect and it got impaired. For sometime he remained seriously insane; then he to some extent improved and it was hoped that he might be able to do something more for our literature, but this wish was not destined to be fulfilled and he did not recover. He wrote, however, a book called *Sapak Namak*, which shows, what a literary man could do even in a state of mental derangement.

I pass on now to an examination of his works, one by one, some reference to which has already been made. The first that I will take up is the *Qisas-s-Hind* which contains an account of the most remarkable events of Indian History given in the most telling manner. The language used and the style employed in this book are simply admirable. To my mind it has always borne a resemblance to the *Gulistan* of Saadi, the peculiar feature of which is that though it is taught to children from the earliest period of their education, it continues to charm them in youth and in old age. Similarly, though in Urdu literature the *Qisas-i-Hind* is the book with which one makes his acquaintance while in the Primary School, but one can enjoy half an hour with it even when he is grown up and has read scores of the best books in the language. The balanced sentences containing words which appeal to one as those exactly fitting the position they occupy, which would hardly admit of being displaced without losing their effect, continue their charm for advanced intellects and developed tastes. Quoting passages requires time and as the book is within everybody's reach you can verify the truth of the statement for yourself.

We had, therefore, better come to a work of his which, though of all others the least read, is regarded as his best in point of literary merit by men of taste. It is a novel feature in Urdu

literature, and contains the best illustrations of his characteristic style which will be found impossible to imitate. If there is one peculiarity in Azad's writings it is this, that its imitation is difficult. Our eminent man of letters, Maulvi Nazir Ahmad also has a style of his own, difficult to be copied, but not to the same extent as the former one, and some attempts have even been made, and not quite without success, to copy it. Another famous modern auther, Sharar, has been imitated with considerble success, but I have not come across a successful imitation of Azad. The best book illustrating this characteristic style is the نیرنگ خیال which is an instructive allegory dealing with human life. This is no place for entering upon the entertaining character of this variety of writing or the powerful influence it exercises over the human mind in impressing otherwise indigestible truths upon it in the most effective manner. This kind of writing is nearly unknown in Urdu literature. The Greeks from whom the word allegory is taken were the first to introduce this method of writing, and it has since gone through several evolutions through the able hands of Roman writers, and later on through the masterly hands of Addison, Swift and John Bunyan, the author of that best known of allegories, the Pilgrim's Progress. There are some very good allegories in the Persian language in the *Masnavi* of Maulana Rum which are possessed of high merit, as well as in the ancient Sanskrit books, translations of which could be had and could have given writers in Urdu some idea of attempting similar productions. So far as I know the honour of having first written an allegory after the true Greek model belongs to Maulvi Azad, in which he shows not only command of the Urdu language but also wonderful acquaintance with the Greek mythological and allegorical lore. I have heard it said, and probably with truth, that the author

owed the plan of this work to Dr. Leitner, who, being himself well-versed in Greek and English, gave Azad the advantage of his knowledge, and it was on materials supplied by him that the superstructure of this "Phenomenon of Imagination," as the name of the book would stand when translated, was raised. Whatever the means employed, the fact stands out in the boldest relief that Azad has accomplished what could be expected only from English knowing scholars of Urdu, in spite of his sad lack of English knowledge, and is thus in a position to put the former, among whom, I am afraid, some of us present here this evening will have to be classed, to shame. One of the most interesting passages in this book is that dealing with the question of the comparison of Zauq and Ghalib. I will not here touch the vexed question of the comparative merits of Zauq and Ghalib, and will not quite endorse the view taken by Azad, but will say this much, that he has said what he had to say in an inimitable way. He was Zauq's pupil, and he must needs admire him even to the extent of denying others their right, but the way in which he has expressed his estimation of Zauq's position in literature does him much credit, as, while extolling Zauq, he has not forgotten Ghalib, though a keen observer could see through the carefully veilled attack on the latter.

The next work demanding our attention is *Ab-i-Hayat*, which, as I have already said, supplies a distinct want and paves the way for Urdu coming to be a literature of permanent value, as it gives an account of the writers in the language from the earliest down to the latest. There were some books already in the language, the most notable of which was one by Abdul Ghafur Khan, *Nassakh*, but it has superceded all as the best fulfilling modern requirements and a little more reliable. This is a book which has been more largely admired than his other productions, and deserves to be, from the

research and labour he has had to go through for it, and will therefore help most in his name being remembered. Yet it is not without its defects. The authenticity of some of the anecdotes regarding the authors described therein is questioned in some quarters. For instance, I have seen a very remarkable ancedote related by Azad, regarding Mir Insha-Ulla Khan's last days, the graphic but pathetic description of which has brought forth many a sincerely shed tear from some tender hearts, contradicted from a very reliable source. A gentleman in Lucknow wno claims relationship with Syed Insha-Ulla says he is prepared to contradict it on the authority of family traditions. I did not want to listen to the gentleman's arguments falsifying Azad's description, as every victory on his side divested me of a portion of a dearly-cherished romance about the great poet, and lessened his importance in my estimation in proportion, as soon as it appeared that Insha was after all not the genius in ruined circustances that has secured our heartiest sympathy, but one who died in wealth and opulence gained in a generous Oriental court. Similarly, his account of the parentage of Mirza Dabir has been taken exception to by a pupil of the latter, who contradicts the author of the *Ab-i-Hayat* with conclusive proofs by giving genealogical trees and copies of ancient royal documents, in a pamphlet distributed gratis. Ghalib has been done scant justice to on account of his rivalry with Zauq. But with all this the performance is memorable, and we owe much to the author of it.

The last* compilation which he has given to Urdu literature is his revised and annotated edition of Zauq. He has rendered it thrice greater in volume

* One more valuable addition to Azad's books has been made by the publication of the *Darbar-i-Akbari*, an entertaining and detailed record of the unprecedented reign of the great Akbar. It was written while the author was in good health, but he could not revise it.

than the ordinary collections in the market before, and still complains that most of what his master had produced has been lost during the Mutiny. His notes giving circumstantial details of the occasions on which some of Zauq's verses were uttered have doubly enhanced the value of the book and have invested some otherwise ordinary verses with a halo of romance. As an example I may call your attention to two well-known lines out of a quite famous *ghazal*:—

گر خدا دیوے قنا عت ماہ یکہفتہ کی طرح
دوڑے ساری کو کبہی آدھی نہ انسان چھوڑ کر

ھم بھی سنتے ھین دکن میں ھے بڑی قدر سخن
کون جائے ذوق پر دھلی کی گلیاں چھوڑ کر

The verses are no more than pretty as they stand, but one cannot help admiring the nobility and heroism of the spirit which gave utterance to them when one learns how great a temptation he had to resist in order to conform to what rightly or wrongly he believed to be his principle. Azad relates that Diwan Chandu Lal was then in power in the Deccan as the Nizam's Diwan and as a man who had great admiration for poetry and loved to gather the best literary men of the day around him. He heard of Zauq and wanted to have him in the Deccan court. He sent a special messenger to Zauq with several thousands of rupees and a line as a طرح as for writing his *ghazal*. The messenger came all the way from the Deccan with the money, delivered his master's message to Zauq, and requested him to make preparations for the journey with the money brought. But Zauq declined the princely offer with thanks, and sent a letter containing two *ghazals* after the specimen prescribed in which he suggestively explained the cause of his inability to go. In providing this revised

collection Azad has rendered signal service to literature. Carping criticism has not, however, left even this performance alone. It is alleged by some that the verses added are not Zauq's, but spurious ones. I cannot say that I have much respect for this theory. I think Azad must deem it a decided compliment to his own ability if people can credit him with the authorship of lines such as those now added in the *Diwan.*

Having chanced to touch on his capacity to write poetry I will take a brief notice of his poetical productions also, if I have not already tired your patience. He may have been gifted by nature with a poetical mind, but, as I have already remarked, he has proved himself a very illustrious example of inclination sacrificed to conviction of what would be useful, and furnishes a precedent well worthy of imitation by many of our rising young men who ought to try to form their tastes according to the needs of the present times. There are only three or four short places of poetry claiming the authorship of Azad that I know of. They are beautiful in their own way, showing raciness, power and felicity of expression embodying very good moral truths or practical precepts. His inspiring piece having a chorus of آزاد کی یہی ھے صدا ھاں بڑھے چلو can well be a watch-word for every student and a guide in life. His poems on nature such as the one describing sun-set, may well vie with some of the best similar descriptions by English poets, and his other poetical attempts are also characterised by simplicity, among which his Ode to the Queen on the Jubilee, beginning: with, اے خوشي ا تیرے آنے سے زمانہ روشن deserves special mention as a model of a simple style. Beyond these few things, as far as I am aware, he has no production in this line and these alone do not go far to establish his claim as

a poet. But these writings added to his vastly useful efforts in prose, no doubt entitle Maulvi Azad to a position, and a very eminent one, among the best modern writers in our language, and he deserves the popularity which he enjoys.

Now I proceed to mention, as I promised in the beginning, some of the causes which have deprived him of popularity outside our Province, or at least have denied him the same amount of it which has fallen to his lot in the Punjab. These consist of prejudice in one form or another. He is depreciated by some of our Lucknow literary magnates simply because he was born at Delhi, which is the greatest crime a writer can commit in the Penal Code of Lucknow criticism. There are others who differing from him in one or two points in the accounts of writers given in the *Ab-i-Hayat* will denounce his other works also as worthless. Others again dislike him on the ground that he has represented Zauq to be of the Shia persuasion, whom they believe to have been a Sunni, as he himself belonged to the former faith. There are others still who, in their admiration for Ghalib cannot bear to acknowledge any worth in a man who was capable of doing any injustice to Ghalib, in order to show of his own idol to the best advantage. For this last mentioned class of ciritics I have one word of advice. Instead of finding fault with Azad for having underrated Ghalib or overestimated Zauq, they should themselves attempt a faithful record of the former's life on the same lines and show his numerous excellences. I have always felt a strong desire to see a pupil or an admirer of Ghalib setting him off at his best. I learn that a life and estimate of his works is promised from the pen of one of his ablest pupils and

I wait for its appearance. * Coming, however, to our subject, we find that different sorts of prejudices have stood in the way of Azad's getting as much fame outside the Punjab, the Province of his life-work, as he deserved, yet he has succeeded eminently in his objects here, and must have the consolation, if his present sad state allows even of this, to see an earnest prayer to which he once gave utterance in the following lines well realised :—

مجھکو تو ملک سے ھے نہ کچھہ مال سے غرض
رکھتا نہین زمانے کے جنجال سے غرض
ھے التجا یہی کہ کرم تو اگر کرے
وہ بات دے زبان مین کہ دل پر اثر کرے

* The biography alluded to has now appeared. It is the Yadgar-i-Ghalib by Hali. I learn that a similar work is contemplated by Mir Mahdi Majruh of Delhi who was perhaps even more intimately acquainted with Ghalib, than Maulvi Hali.

MAULVI NAZIR AHMAD AND HIS WORKS.

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Shams-ul-Ulama Maulvi Nazir Ahmad of Delhi is one of the few authors who have the satisfaction of noticing unmistakable signs of the appreciation of their work in their life-time. The life of a literary man in all countries and all ages has been as a rule far from a life of wealth and affluence, and troubles have generally been the lot of literary men, and it was by shining in spite of all disadvantages, that they have proved the superior stuff they were made of and have ended their lives leaving the world dazzled by the lustre of genius, and feeling sorry for its failure to recognize and reward merit, when it was time. With the beginning of the present century, there came a change over Europe in this respect, and authorship began to pay. The present century of the history of England, in common with that of other civilised countries, affords remarkable instances of literary men, who were exceptions to the above rule, and amassed great fortunes by literature. In the East, however, before the contact with European civilisation in some parts of it, the only way of encouragement of literary men, mostly poets, had been through the bounty of kings and rulers. The East did not enjoy printing as early as the West, and therefore, books for a long time remained in Asia, the privilege and the luxury of the rich and the great. By the time learning had reached every nook and corner of Europe and printed books on moderate prices were placed within the reach of the ordinary middle class people, Asiatic countries had all the ancient stores of literature pent up in manuscript volumes in the libraries of the great or the learned, and none but a rich man, actuated by a strong zeal for learning, could obtain permission to get any

of those books copied, and after spending what the edition of perhaps a thousand copies of a book costs now-a-days, he was possessed of only one copy of a book, which was again jealously guarded from the rest of the world. This state of things was shared by India in common with other Eastern lands. Thus beginning late, it has lagged behind the world and while the fortunes of literary men of the first rank have vastly improved in England, there are the same old troubles and difficulties still staring one aspiring to a literary life in this country in the face. The wide propagation of literature of all sorts in India, being only about a century old just now, the prospects of a man desiring to live a decently comfortable life, on pure literature, without any outside help and patronage depending solely on the sale and public appreciation of his books, for his name, fame and wealth, are not very alluring. This description of the present state of literature and literary men in India would sound like a digression in the very beginning, but a digression must be excused while writing of an author, one of the chief features of whose style, at least in one class of his writings is a long digression. But the reason why the above description has been introduced is to show that in spite of the fact that books do not sell well here, those of our author have had a remarkable sale for India. One reason for this sale, in addition to the intrinsic qualities of the books which we shall notice later on, was that Maulvi Nazir Ahmad did not depend on literature when he began te write. His services under the British and the Nizam's Governments had earned him a respectable pension and otherwise placed him beyond want. This privelege, enjoyed by so few of the writers in India, has given to his writings a tone of independence possessed by so few of the productions of these days and placed him in a position to guide the public taste and form

it, rather than pander to it in its vitiated condition.

Our object here, is to review briefly his various writings and therefore we will confine ourselves to seeing him as a writer, while as a man, possessed of numerous distinctions as he is, we will have to let him alone. In the first place a biographical sketch of a living author is not quite necessary, and in the second place, as has been said in some preceeding essays, materials for biographical sketches are not easy to get. There are few who care to mark and note the lives of our famous men, just as biographers do in England and the personages concerned are, as a matter of course, silent about themselves. Not long ago, I mentioned to Maulvi Nazir Ahmad, that I intended to write something about him, just as I had done about Maulvis Hali and Azad, and hinted to him by way of preparation, that I may have to request him to supply some facts about his early education and subsequent career before he became otherwise known. But as was to be expected, he desired me to let him alone and take up some celebrity more deserving of notice, as he modestly put it. I thought of entering into correspondence with him again, in the hope of moving him to yield and be of some help, but I was afraid lest a second peremptory request urging me not to touch him, may leave these short sketches on the literary men of Northern India incomplete and without a most essential component, and therefore I decided not to consult his wishes in the matter at all. So I am left to fall back on the meagre information as to his life, that can be gathered from his books, speeches and published letters and will manage to look at him through these mediums alone. His published lectures and speeches will, of course, come in for criticism as his literary performances and I hope will help me to impress his personality on the minds of my readers

better than would have been the case, had Maulvi Nazir Ahmad not been gifted with his remarkable power of public speaking.

His figure has of late become a familiar one in parts of the Punjab and the North Western Provinces and people at Lahore must have a very vivid image of him in their minds, as he has amused and enlightened them with his speeches oftner than the people of any other one locality except perhaps, Aligarh. Every winter, thousands of persons coming together, from various parts of the Province to celebrate the anniversary of the Islamia educational institution,under the auspices of the Anjuman-Himayat i-Islam. Lahore, may be seen in their seats an hour earlier than the time fixed for opening the day's proceedings waiting impatiently for an old gentleman, who has made it a point to make his appearance just at the moment when he is expected to begin and to disappear from the platform as soon as he is done, showing thereby that he realises that public orators in order to be most effective in their speeches must preserve an imaginary charm about them and except for the necessity of moving the public, must be as little in touch with them as possible. Precisely at the appointed hour and minute, you hear a clapping of hands, boisterous like a sea-storm and see emerging from the enterance a man with a simple round cap peculiar to himself, with his grey hair not very attentively arranged, a short grey beard to which nature has given almost the form of an imperial, with an impressive countenance and broad forehead, wearing an *achkan* and *pajama* of a strictly old fashion and with a pair of Cashmere shawls thrown over his shoulders, unique in appearance as well as in dress. On his enterance he gives a courteous bow in answer to the clapping with which his audience received him and walks straight to the platform and is off with his speech. He begins

without any preliminaries—Western or Oriental—without any ladies or gentlemen, but at the same time does not apply straight to a set topic. He appears to be begining at random, and carries his audience with him in all his ramblings through the vast fields of literature, Arabic, Persian and Urdu, which he quotes at any length, with the greatest ease and facility, and intersperses his speech with brilliant repartees of wit and humour, convulsing the audience, growing serene and pathetic and humorous and jolly at alternate intervals, with his hearers weeping and laughing, till nobody remembers when he began and how long he has been speaking. This revel of learning and wit, which is full of moral precepts and useful maxims, can only be stopped when he is reminded that he has had his full time, which is always about three or four hours and then he knows how cleverly to shift his discourse to the point which he specially means to impress, and at the conclusion of speech one finds out that the speaker had not for a moment given up a line of thought in his own mind and while seeming to ramble, he was driving at a particular point which he has driven home into the hearts of his audience but too successfully. One acquainted with Maulvi Nazir Ahmad simply through his العروس—مرات النعش—بنات ایامی and ابن الوقت could hardly believe that the moralising author of these works or the almost pathetic writer of توبتہ النصوح had a fund of humour at his disposal equalled by few in this country and could equal Mark Twain himself in quaint humour. The figure thus familiarised to the Punjabi, though considerably at the expense of his purse, as it is seldom that any one listens to his discourse without loosening his purse strings, when he makes an appeal for funds on behalf of a religious or educational institution, is not the less known in

the North Western Provinces through the medium of the Muhammadan Educational Conference. There in the midst of his modernised co-religionists in European coats and trousers, wearing collars and neckties, among men of liberal and even ultraliberal views on religion, among people whom the orthodox regard as heretics, he stands the same embodiment of simplicity, insisting on bringing in his own old fashioned religious views which he looks upon as those of Islam in its purity, and pronouncing them with a distinctness and emphasis which characterise him and yet without giving his hearers any offence. In religious views siding with the old school, in educational matters he vigorously supports the new and sets forth the wisdom and propriety of the educational policy of Muhammadans being maintained on the lines laid down by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan who has fitly been called the "Pioneer of English Education" among the Muhammadans. A contrast though the assembly of the Conference presents to that of the Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam, inasmuch as it possesses fewer men, yet they are men gifted with high education, men claiming to be masters of the Urdu language, sharp critics ready to catch at the slightest flaw in language, and Maulvi Nazir Ahmad is as much a master of the situation in that assembly of elsewhere. The same weeping and the same laughing at command are the features of the Conference meeting in the course of the Maulvi's speech. The fact that he was a good public speaker seems to have been a comparatively recent discovery. To understand how Maulvi Nazir Ahmad's literary powers have specially been acknowledged in his old age, a bird's eye view of his past career will be necessary. His knowledge of Urdu, except for the cultivation of it in after life, needs no explanation as he belongs to Delhi, the home and the birthplace of Urdu language, and the idiom used there is even

now the test applied to Urdu used or acquired elsewhere. Of course, Lucknow has of late contested the privilege of authority but the balance of opinions is still in favour of Delhi, where the language exists almost in its purest form and has not received the extra gloss of Lucknow, which making it glittering and polished, removes it far from its real genuineness. What strikes one in Maulvi Nazir Ahmad is religious learning combined with a share of the modern which fact goes to make him so much of a favourite. Born in a family in which Islamic learning was hereditary, his very early education has been among learned Maulvis and he has been brought up in the creed of his fathers. This accounts for his tenacious hold of the old doctrines and ways, notwithstanding the various changes of education and society, with which he met subsequently in life. He is probably one of the batch of men produced by the Delhi College, which turned out a number of capable and sound men who have proved successful in various walks of life. The institution known as the Delhi College, in the pre-Mutinaic times did not possess the same amount of English literature, Arts and Science in its curriculum as the present Colleges boast of. Outwardly it was about the same standard as the present High Schools, but it seems, judging by the sort of men turned out by it, that the machinery of education or the men working it then were superior to those of the present day in some respects. After some vicissitudes in life, the earliest of which was coming out on a small salary to the Punjab, we find him a Deputy Collector in the North-Western Provinces. Thus having secured a high appointment in Government service he appears to have found some leisure for literary attempts, as I remember having come across a book of short stories in Urdu by him which must be a production of his earliest days, and from

the impression I have of it I do not think it gave hopes of much literary eminence. We next meet him as one of the translators of the Indian Penal Code, that monumental work of Lord Macaulay. No better man than Lord Macaulay could have been found to be a member of the Commission framing so important a code of laws and though defects as every human work must reveal in itself by the lapse of time, may be found in it here and there, yet there can be not hesitation in pronouncing the Indian Penal Code to be the best and the most comprehensive and distinct of all the big volumes of acts which form the law governing India. For a work of this sort, translators better than Maulvi Nazir Ahmad and his colleagues could hardly be found and the Urdu translation of the Indian Penal Code is distinguished among translations of law books for the appropriateness of vernacular words used for some very difficult expressions and general perspicuity in conveying the commands of the Penal law to those not understanding English.

The book that first gave promise of a good writer in Maulvi Nazir Ahmad, was his *Mirat-ul-Urus*. It was a story of a complete transformation of an uneducated girl belonging to a respectable Indian family by education. It was written as a story to make it readable and attractive, but it was really a complete treatise on female education. The question of female education had at the time come in for a serious cousideration in Northern India, and people while admitting that elementary reading and writing in Urdu was at least essential for their women, were looking about for suitable books to be placed in the hands of their girls but could not find them. The *Miratul-Urus* supplied this want and was deservedly appreciated. The first recognition of its worth was from the Government of the North-Wstern Provinces in the form of a handsome reward in money and the

public followed suit. The book began to have a rapid sale and became favourite in the higher circles of Indian and specially Muhammadan families. The life described in it was the life of respectable Muhammadan family of Hindustan proper, and the secret of its finding favour with women was the faithful exactness with which the language of the *Zenana* was copied by the author. In this respect it was really unique and almost the first of its kind and has, therefore, not only been the means of bringing decent profit to the author, but of doing a vast amount of good to the female world, with whom its heroine has become a very encouraging example for improving themselves. It has by this time gone through several editions. The next book to follow it was *Binat-un-Nash* which was practically a sequel to the *Miratul-Urus* dealing again with the advantages of female education, but on a somewhat advanced scale, by giving useful lessons in general knowledge and physical science through conversation between a girl and her *Ustani* or governess. This met with a similar success in every respect, gaining for the writer the same prize from the Government and the same encouragement from the public. The style in this book began to show a little change in sounding more learned, but otherwise the book was of equal importance and rank with its predecessor and is along with it a *vade mecum* for many a Muhammadan girl. Maulvi Nazir Ahmad's great service to Urdu-knowing India is his supplying it with books specially adapted for female education and it may safely be said that the chief feature of his subsequent writings is that each one of them may be placed in the hands of a girl of tender years by the most scrupulous and conscientious of fathers. Viewed in this light he stands above all the writers of stories and novels in India, past or present, and is to be envied in so much as none but his books form the staple commodity of the

education of Muhammadan females in this country, wherever it is imparted. It may be remarked, in passing, that the above statement is hardly very creditable to the state of female education or complimentary to the sense of its necessity among us, as line chalked out by Maulvi Nazir Ahmad has not been followed by other writers and his books have not been succeeded by others supplying further and higher needs of female education.

Before noticing some of his other books, we may allude in passing to his taking service in Hyderabad as a change for the better from his Deputy Collectorship, where he rose to high rank as a District Officer. The period of his service there was one of responsibilities of a great office which he discharged with great credit, but was not one of literary activity. Of course the discovery of power had been made and perhaps plots of future efforts in the field of letters were already maturing, when he honourably retired on a handsome pension from the Nizam's Government and came back to settle in Delhi, his adopted home. He did not, like other men retiring from service in responsible capacities, retire with his energy exhausted and his faculties blunted. He was in the enjoyment of good health and was gifted by nature with a robust constitution hankering for work and the years of his well-earned rest at home have not been idled away, but have proved of very great value to Urdu literature.

Besides the two books already noticed, we have from his pen *Tobat-un-Nasuh*, *Ibn-ul-Waqt*, *Ayama*, numerous written lectures and speeches on subjects of communal good, poems of different sorts and, last though not the least, a translation in idiomatic Urdu of the Qoran. Most of these valuable productions have been given to the world after the Maulvi's retirement from service. All these are stories, readable and interesting with a peculiarity claimed by

very few other booke in India, of being written with some moral or aim in view and not for the sake of amusement of the writer or readers. They do not, like other novels, contain sensational anecdotes of love, its hopes and disappointments and its failures and successes. They are all more or less serious tales dealing with some momentous question of the day. *Taubat-un-Nasuh*, regarded by some as the best of his books taken all round, is a tale of a penitent sinner, whom a serious attack of cholera from which he escapes after hopelessness, brings to a sense of his duty to God and turns his thoughts to the world to come. His reform comes as a surprise to his family. The wife readily joins him and takes up his views, but the children, especially the eldest son, prove intractable. The troubles to which the father is put in reforming his eldest son spoilt by his former habits which had been indulged by the father formerly, are graphically described and show the necessity of the careful training and discipline of children in early life, while the ludicrous in which the spoiled son places himself by his follies, teach youths the rashness and absurdity of disregarding well-meant advice of their guardians.

In the *Ibn-ul-Waqt* the author has portrayed a native gentleman, who rising to position owing to some services in the Indian Mutiny, takes to modern notions of European living and not only adopts European dress but actually joins European society through the favour of an English Official friend. While in European society he is indulged simply through the influence of his English friend, and alienates the sympathies of his Indian friends and relations. On the departure of his English friend for Europe, he finds himself deserted by the society to join which he had spent all his fortune and on falling from the heaven of living in a bungalow in the cantonment to the hell of putting up at an old

house in a street in the city he dearly learns the lesson, that in prosperity while cultivating the society of those to whose level fortune had by a combination of circumstances raised him, he should not have forgotten his real equals and should not have imprudently exceeded proper bounds in his desire to mix freely with Europeans. *Ayama* is an instructive book on widow-marriage, in which the life of an Indian widow is described with her troubles and diffIcultities. His latest story *Roya-i-Sadiqa* has dreams and their reality for its theme. Another book *Muhsinat* or the adventures of *Mubtila* (one ensnared), which though published under the name of his son, has had a share of his pen also, is a beautiful little story warning people against having two wives, as Mr. Ensnared knows not how to extricate himself from the snare he prepared for himself by marrying two wives at a time. The motto given to the book is an excellent verse in Urdu.

هم معتقد دعوي باطل نہین هوتے
سینہ مین کسی شخص کے دو دل نہین هوتے

Needless to say that all these books are written in the best Urdu spoken in Delhi, with perhaps the only fault of the style being rather heavy and ponderous. We noticed while reviewing the *Binat-un-Nash* that the style grew learned and this quality has been more and more marked in the works following it, till in the ایامی and the رویاے صادقہ has reached its climax. The later writings abound in somewhat cumbrous Arabic and Persian words and contain also a large number of quotations from Arabic, though the latter may be excused on account of the nature of the subjects dealt with in his latest books.

In enumerating Maulvi Nazir Ahmad's works, I mentioned his poems. The words must have come as a surprise, as no previous allusion to him as a poet had been made. But the surprise must

cease when it is stated that poetry is one of his latest discoveries about his own capacities and is almost simulataneous with his public-speaking. As described already in his official career in British India as well as in the Nizam's dominions he was not given to speechifying and it is during his retirement that we find him consenting to deliver lectures in public at the request of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and lately for some years at the request of the Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam, Lahore, and of the managers of the Madrassa-i-Tibbya, Delhi on important annunal occasions. I remember him breaking into verse, before begginning his lecture in a meeting of the Educational Conference. The lines hardly deserve to be called anything more than versified prose as they expressed his ideas at the time in being obliged to lecture in rhyme and contained no poetry. He said for instance that he could not understand why he was expected to speak at the Conference every year, having lectured once or twice before, and that he had come over for the sake of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, otherwise tho crowded meetings were not much of a fascination to his mind preferring solitude. It will be admitted that there is not much of poetry there. But little did he know, that though resenting the yoke of having to deliver a speech every year, being new to it, the yoke would be permanently on his neck with double and treble force, and that instead of having to lecture at one place, he would be expected at three places every year and that lines in verse instead of being a passionate prelude to that one speech, would come to form almost an essential part of his lectures in all the three places. He did not know that people who thronged to hear his prose would discover some spice in his verse, at least in his manner of reading it, and the demand would necessitate the supply, necessity being the mother of invention from

time immemorial. So we have almost invariably had from him since, long pieces of poetry either at the beginning of his speeches, or at the end, or put in the middle as a variety. Once we had a whole lecture in verse. The verses gradually began to improve in quality, till they showed much of the warmth and passion of his prose and occasional outbursts of true poetry. His subject, of course, was always inspring, dealing now with the always fresh, though beaten, subject of the vicissitudes in the history of his people, then persuading them to advance and improve once more. There is one decided feature of distinction in his verses, that he has an unending variety of rhymes at his command, and the number of lines that can flow from him with the observance of all the restrictions of rhyme imposed by Oriental versification, is perhaps unparalleled. Yet he always disclaims to be a poet, in spite of his evident superiority to hundreds passing by the name of poets in India, and has not got for himself a nom-de-plume, the *takhallus*, so essential to poets in this country. While admiring his modesty in disclaiming poesy, with all his power of writing with effect in that line, we cannot help saying that he writes it more by dint of his learning, than by any inner prompting, except in certain pieces which could not but be the production of inspired moments. We need not, therefore give much time to him as a poet, as his *forte* after all is prose. Before concluding, we must say something of the work, which may in all probability be the most memorable of his works and is from a religious point of view the most valuable to Muhammadans. The author himself, at least, wants to be remembered for it more than for any other of his productions. He says that he has devoted the greatest time and labour to its preparation and has done it in the hope that he is doing service to God. We refer of course, to his Urdu

translation of the Quran. For three years he has been at it, with four paid Maulvis to assist him and it has almost totally absorbed his attention during that period. He has tried to make it idiomatic and authentic. By authentic he means that he has taken the meanings given by the commentators acknowledged as authorities on all hands. Translations of the Quran in Urdu, no doubt, existed in numbers already, but the language was so antiquated that in some cases it made it difficult for a reader to catch the real sense of the text, while it was always a labour to read those translations, and one could go through them with facility feeling a pleasure while reading. Maulvi Nazir Ahmad has tried to achieve this end, taking care at the same time to stick to the literal meaning as much as possible, using parentheses to introduce explanatory clauses, and with remarkable success. Speaking of his translation on a public occasion he said that for the present it was likely to find favour neither with Muhammadans of the old school nor with those of the new. The old school, perhaps, may condemn it as coming from one belonging to the new party, while the new may reject it as full of all the old beliefs in the existence of the supernatural which they had rejected as unscientific. But he hoped that a century hence the representatives of both parties would have his translation in their hands. He made this prophecy from his view of the coming times and tastes as judged by watching the present, and its future popularity is not far from probable. It is contrary to his fears becoming a pretty encouraging success with the present generation, and if his attractive style makes study of the Quran common among the Muhammadans Maulvi Nazir Ahmad will have rendered to his community a service which can hardly be repaid.

PANDIT RATAN NATH SARSHAR.

No account of the best modern Urdu writers can be complete, without a reference to Pandit Ratan Nath Sarshar of Lucknow, one of the most popular novelists of India and the well-known author of the "*Fisana-i-Azad.*" The idea is very common and not without some grounds, that the Urdu language, though spoken alike by Muhammadans and Hindus in all parts of India where it is understood, has come to be a sort of special property of Muhammadans. In fashionable literary circles the productions of a Hindu writer are generally at discount and are not thought much of. Though it will not do for purposes of fair criticism to start with a prepossession against the merit, of writings in Urdu by Hindu authors, yet many, who condemn such literature as of small literary value do so under the influence of that prepossession. The time is not very near when India will have number of just literary critics, deciding things upon their merits and not on personal bias or inclination. But as to writings of Hindu authors in Urdu, it must be confessed at the same time, that the Hindus also have not thought it fit to devote that attention to this literature which characterises their efforts in other directions, nor have they brought that application to bear upon a study of Urdu, for which they are reputed. The language, though based on Bhasha the language of the Hindus, has gradually acquired more of Arabic and Persian words than the indigenous ones, owing to the influence of Muhammadan rulers of the land who adopted it and while the Muhammadans have got attached to it more and more, the former have grown lukewarm to it in proportion. Moreover its earlier literature and much of its present one being devoted more to amusement and pleasure than instruction and profit, a cultivation of its taste did not quite accord with the practical

genius of the Hindu people. They thought it better to leave the luxury of objectless versifying to the Muhammadans who had grown comfort-loving and inactive and devoted themselves to the world. Now that the change of times has infused a new spirit into the language and a power to write in some of its branches or to speak it fluently is coming to be regarded as an enviable privilege, as a matter of course those who had lost themselves as it were, in studying the language, have the better of others who never gave it a moment's thought. The assertion, therefore, that by far the best writers in Urdu are to be found amoung Muhammadans and quite a number of them to boot, while the Hindus have few and far between, is true and need not be disputed. But the notion among some that they have not the power to equal Muhammadan authors in this respect, if they wish and turn themselves to it, is as groundless as possible, and Pandit Ratan Nath Sarshar stands a notable example of the height a Hindu may attain to in literary worth in Urdu, if he only applies himself to it. He is a rare example, no doubt, all over India, of a Hindu, who can stand comparison, can well bear the comparison and maintain his own ground. Though generally speaking the Hindu people have reason to be proud of him as a writer, yet the Kashmiri Pandits have in him a shining ornament of their caste and may justly feel a pride in owning him. A tribute and a deserved one to the caste itself may not be out of place here. The Kashmiri Pandits are, to my mind, a sort of beautiful link between the two sister communities living side by side in India, whose relations unfortunately have of late not been very sisterlike. The reason of this in addition to political, religious and other causes, is that the tastes of both are not very common in point of food, dress, arts and literature. The political and religious causes of difference must

always subsist, in the nature of things in India, as there seems no prospect of their being removed, but the state of things would have been much better, had there been a community of tastes between Hindus and Muhammadans. The Pandits, ingenious as every native of Kashmir has been made by nature, adapted themselves more to the tastes of Muhammadans, who ruled India when they settled here, than any other class of the Hindus. They began to mix with them more freely than others, they adopted much of the nourishing food used by Muhammadans, and showed great ingenuity in picking up the Urdu language which they now use as their mother tongue wherever they may be, with a pure and faultless accent and with perfect accuracy in idiom. In the refinement of literary tastes they did not lag behind and are to this day adepts in appreciating the subtleties of poetry or prose in Urdu. This bond of common likes and dislikes in literature, it goes without saying, is hardly to be despised. It was remarked some time ago by an Indian speaker in a public meeting, that no educated native of India could help binding his fate with the English people, as long as educated India and England had Shakespeare and Milton in common. He meant emphatically to give expression to his admiration of the two great writers of England and allowing for some exaggeration, this much may be safely asserted that no two admires of Shakespeare, knowing the fact of their common liking, can long be enemies. A similar fact was very well illustrated in the earlier days of British rule. The Englishmen that came out to India as Military or Civil officers had among them many a good scholar of Oriental languages. Though the literary tastes of these scholars, served more to amuse themselves and beguile some dull hours of what was felt a life of exile, yet they were of immense service to their nation through these tastes and proved a boon to India.

Their translations of some of the master-pieces of Sanskrit, Arabic or Persian writers had a world of influence in dissolving the prejudice against Orientals in the minds of the Europeans and could not but infuse in them a sense that a people with such grand literatures could not be uncivilised and senseless as could possibly be supposed without such acquaintance and deserved kind treatment. The respect for the representatives of the race or religion of their admired writers made those Englsshmen themselves mix on a very friendly footing with Indians, which bound the Indian minds to their English rulers more firmly than any other thing could possibly do and the ties of these times have not broken asunder in spite of short-sided efforts to the contrary. Such, is the power of literature when properly used, and it is not uncommon to find a Muhammadan admirer of Sarshar and a Hindu admirer of Nazir Ahmad feeling very friendly towards each other. I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that the *Fisana-i-Azad*, of Sarshar has been read more by Muhammadans than by Hindus and there must be many among his readers, who but for this book, would not have felt so warmly for the writer and his people, as they do. Thus it will appear that Pandit Ratan Nath has not only added to the bulk of the literature of his country, but has also done good to it otherwise.

Coming to the particular from the general, we have to give an estimate of his writings. I am sorry to be unable to introduce my readers, at this stage, to the personality of this auther, as I have not had the pleasure of seeing him upto this time myself. As is evident from his writings, he is a man with a marvellous power of observation of minute detail and gifted with a vast experience of every phase of the life which he had tried to depict in his book. His descriptions are word pictures in which we see all

classes of the Luckhow society, to which he has confined himself, moving before our eyes in an unending panorama, not in a dumb show with mere gestures, but endowed with the power of speech, supplying a chorus for the ears as well. I have verified the faithfulness and truth of Sarshar's pictures by a comparison of them with the real Lucknow life for myself and daresay that not a single individual in Lucknow from the indolent and ease-loving *Wasiqadar* to the commonest street rough or the infester of the drug shop with his empty boasts or the opium-drinker (for they do not eat opium in Lucknow) with his castles in the air, but you will find his representatives or prototype in the books of Pandit Ratan Nath Sarshar. The pandit was the editor of the *Oudh Akhbar* of Lucknow, when he produced his first, his best, and to my mind his last book, which earned him the fame which he enjoys. Far above the common run of the editor of a vernacular newspaper iu India, who believes all ability to consist in stringing together a few sentenses in broken Urdu and being an expert in defaming and libelling, and regards a sweet recklessness of consequences in writing, as equivalent to the moral courage of the best European journalist of which he has but faintly heard, Pandit Ratan Nath made the paper of which he was in charge a great success in his time. The voluminous story of *Azad*, he first gave to the world in small instalments, through the columns of the *Oudh Akhbar* and almost killed people by anxious waiting to hear the fates of the heroes and horoines of the story, in whom he had successfully interested them. When after its completion, the story began to appear in book form, and was finished in four volumes, it had a very encouraging sale, inspite of its price being somewhat prohibitory for India. It was read more vastly than it was sold and charmed everybody. There were

some voices here and there of the critics of the class indicated in the begining of this essay, finding fault with the language of Pandit Ratan Nath and giving expression to the same unfounded preposition, that the Pandit could not be expected to write fully idiomatic Urdu, put this elicited a very frank and at the same time a very bold reply from the auther, who could well defy puny critics with no writings of their own, indicating a fault here and there in the four volumes of good Urdu before them. He wrote that he frankly admitted that he owed his facile use of Urdu and his intimate khowledge of it to the opportunity he had in his childhood of moving freely in respectable Muhammadan homes and there learning the language in all its purity, undefiled by heavy foreign words, from the ladies of the families. and subsequently to the society of learned Muhammadan gentlemen. While ready to acknowlege where gratitude was due, he said he could boldly claim that every common Muhammadan writer was not in a positson to assert his superiority over him merely for being a Muhammadan and we admit that he was quite justified in throwing the gauntlet in the above terms, which needless to say, has not been picked up.

The rest of his writings the *Jam-i-Sarshar*, the *Sair-i-Kohsar*, and the minor ones such as *Pi Kahan*, *Kamni*, *Bichhri hui Dulhan* and *Hashu*, cannot be said to be possessed of any peculiar merit, as the life described is essentially the same, the persons introduced very similar, their dialects and laguage repeating themselves with monotony, and even some of the same quotations and verses occurring again, as had been used in the former works. The peculiarity of Pandit Ratan Nath in which he stands distinct from all the rest of the living writers is that he is prolific. The strange way in which he manages to turn out large volumes upon volumes makes

one only wonder how he managed to write so much. But in this bulk of his books again lies his only fault as a writer. In fact it is to be regretted that he thinks it proper to write stories for magazines and newspapers. He may find in it an extra source of income, but it certainly deteriorates the quality of his work. Work for magazine, and periodical is always destined to be done in a certain amount of hurry and even for an experienced hand, it cannot be without the defects incidental to haste. I have lately seen, for instance, two of his latest small stories, *Pi Kahan* and *Hasho* and though advertised in the papers as masterpeices of his genious, they are perhaps just a blot on his name. If Pandit Ratan Nath has the least care for leaving a name as writer for posterity and is not content with the passing whims of the public, which must accept even trash from known writers, he would be well advised to stop such careless writing. The stories are utterly destitute af art, have very nominal plots, deal with very improbable incidents and on the whole leave the blankest possible impression on the mind after one has done reading them. The *Pi Kahan* for example is a tragedy, which ends in a lover dying of broken heart and his beloved girl coming to see him while breathing his last and dying there all atonce, with her hands clasped round her lover's neck. Nothing could be more miserable than the mockery of a lecture on temperance with which the *Hasho* ends. Not only is his present writing stories for periodicals to be pitied but I have always felt a regret as to why his great book the *Fisana-i-Azad* ever sppeared in the columns of a newspaper. This book would have been simply matchless had it been of just the half of its present bulk. Had it been written as a book, the plot would have been more artistically connected, the humorous and witty portions describing the ever amusing

Khoji more sparingly introduced, so as not to be felt as spoiling the effect of the beautiful story. But the exigencies of an editorial life and the necessity of giving the story piecemeal are responsible for robbing the book of almost half the beauties which it would have otherwise possessed. As it is, however, it is a splendid combination of essays, lectures, travels, and fiction and can give food to persons of every turn of mind and of all literary tastes. The two beautiful sisters Husn Ara and Sipihr Ara, the heroines of the book, are accomplished, educated and gifted girls whom nobody can help admiring and sympathising with.

Sarshar has succeeded in completely lifting the veil from off the impregnable *Zenana* of the higher circles of Lucknow Muhammadan life and it is quite a privilege to go with him to visit scenes of inner life which, as a rule, are a sealed book to the majority of native males, not to speak of foreigners. Pandit Rattan Nath shows a wonderfully remarkable acquaintance with the manners and conversation of respectable Muhammadan ladies and describes it with a fidelity which many less observing men who have lived all their lives in the sphere cannot command. His imitation of the numerous dialects and accents distinguishing the speech of ladies from that of men of city-folk from villagers, of the educated from the uneducated, of the *Musahib* from the street beggar and so on in endless detail, is entirely his own. The hero of his story, however, named *Azad*, is a creation of his imagination and an individual not very ordinarily met with. He is a perfect man of the world, he is very handsome, very enlightened, knowing several languages, a soldier and a wit, a poet and a lover, a clever conversationalist falling in love with several women or rather having every one that sees him falling in love with him. He can adorn the highest society, but is at the same

time easily at home among the lowliest. Now you find him flirting with a *Bhatiari* girl for purposes of his own and again you find him admitted to the harems of the highest in the land without any introduction but his good looks and smooth tongue. There is much in him that is shocking to one's sense of the congruous and the possible, but no one can help liking him as much for his own sake as for the sake of his faithful attendant and companion, *Khoji*. In *Khoji* we have a bundle of weaknesses, physical as well as intellectual a pigmy unconscious of his dwarfishness, always boasting of his past deed of valour which are anything but real, exciting ridicule and laughter at his own expense wherever he goes and deeming the world somehow or other intentionly shutting its eye to his excellences. In his own way *Khoji* is a unique creation in the whole range of Urdu literature and would have done immense credit to the genius of Pandit Ratan Nath, if he had been more sparingly introduced. As it is he excites a good deal of interest in the begining and affords real amusement, but as the reader gradually finds himself deeply concerned as to the fortunes of the chief characters in the story, *Khoji* begins to appear an intrusion, till he becomes quite tiresome. The reason of this shortcoming has been referred to already, that is the want of artistic excellence due to the hurry natural in case of stories written for newspapers. On the whole, however, the *Fisana-i-Azad* is a work of exceptional merit and entitles Ratan Nath to a permanent place among the best and most original novelists of the present day in the Urdu language.

MAULVI ABDUL HALIM, SHARAR.

In *Sharar* we have, in a way, the most characteristic writer of the modern age of Urdu literature. Maulvi Abdul Halim, hails from a place near Lucknow and was till recently not so largely known outside the capital of Oudh. He seems, however, to have been qualifying himself for the work he completed, till all of a sudden he surprised the literary world of India by a monthly magazine which he issued some ten years ago and took it, as it were, by storm. The monthly paper called "*Dilgudaz*" (The Melter of Hearts), which proved his making, was really an imitation of some English periodicals in its plan, but periodicals were till then so rare in this country and that particular kind was so novel, that it was welcomed by the public with a zeal which had not fallen to the lot of many a good Urdu book. The secret of its success was that the editor had grasped firmly the inclination of the modern taste as to style as well as subject matter. The spread of a knowledge of the English language and literature, and the contact with European modes of thought and speech had made people dislike the old laboured bombast of the *Fisana-i-Ajaib* days and a simple, easy flowing style was becoming the fashion. The *Dilgudaz* of *Sharar* came out with interesting and readable essays of the *Spectator* and *Rambler* type, on historical, social, and moral subjects and with a novel based on the history of the crusades. Essays exactly of the type referred to were, in the first place, never known in Urdu and in the second place their adaptation to native taste by the writer was so complete that every body began to read the magazine very eagerly and there were many who used impatiently to wait for the next number. The writings of Hali, and Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and energitic workers of the Aligarh school had by

that time awakened a warm interest in the past history of the Muhammadans and Maulvi Abdul Halim *Sharar* judiciously took advantage of that awakened spirit by not only writing many of his essays on historical subjects, but basing his first novel on a chapter of Muhammadan history, which for the glorious chivalry of its heroes has few parallels.

The first novel which brought him name and fame was "Aziz and Vergina," which first appeared in instalments during the first year of the existence of the *Dilgudaz*, and was published separately afterwards. The novel deals with the crusading campaign between Richard, Cuer de Lion, on the one side and Sultan Salah-ud-Din on the other. The hero *Aziz* is a young man of great valour and promise, gifted with a most winning appearance and charming manners, as formidable in war as sociable and agreeable in peace. Virgina is described as a favourite niece of Richard who was with him in the campaign. A chance of war brings the two youthful persons in contact and they both get enamoured of each other. The story then relates the love of these two royal personages and thus softens the effect of descriptions of stern war, which are painted too vividly to be indulged without this softening effect. The novel, in the main, deals with accounts of military tactics and bravery of both the armies fighting in the name of religion, which inspire one with admiration. The beauty of it is that the writer sticks to history as much as possible, quoting authorities in foot-notes for the statements made in his book. The only episode which is unauthenticated, introduced to conform to the traditions

of a novel, is the love between the Prince 'Aziz' and the Princess Virgina. This book was followed by a number of historical novels, which appeared like the former, first in the magazine and were reproduced afterwards in book form. The essays in the magazine continued to be appreciated as long as the periodical lasted. Though we cannot afford to give a brief resume of the plot of each one of the beautiful novels produced by *Sharar*, at least one more historical story of his deserves a passing allusion. The "Mansur and Mohina" has its scene laid in India, at the time of the invasion of Somnath by Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni. History of India can hardly boast of a more stirring struggle for the sake of religion. Mahmud professed to undertake numerous invasions of India in the name of religion, though spoil too he got in plenty. The invasion on the Somnath was the severest. Somnath seems to have at the time been the centre of Hindu devotion at least for Western India and Rajputana. Hoards of Rajput princes with their combined forces engaged in a final struggle with Mahmud, before the ancient temple of Somnath, for their life, liberty and religion. The description of heroism displayed by both the armies, the one fighting for their honour, house and home, and the other removed at a distance of thousand of miles from the place of its nativity, with parched deserts and waterless saharas intervening, desperately contending for supremacy are so realistic, that one passes through all he reads while perusing the book.

To *Sharar*, I believe, belongs the credit of being the first novelist in Urdu, in the true sense of the term. No doubt, we had stories like the *Fisana-i-Ajaib* the *Tilsim-i-Hosh Ruba*, the *Bostan-i-Kkyal* or smaller ones of less importance which with the Urdu translation of the Arabian Nights' tales, satisfied the common passion of the human mind to be amused

by accounts of strange and exciting adventures of others. Excellent in points of literary merit as all such books have been in their own times, there was one thing about them that they never aimed to be true to life. In the Arabian Nights, no doubt, we see a picture of Bagdad life as it was in the palmy days of the Caliphs and it is no doubt the source and prototype of many a novel in Asia and Europe and is therefore one of those few books which are, so to speak, the common property of all mankind. But with reference to the *Tilisms* and the *Fisanas* above alluded to, it may safely be said, that wonderful as the imagination displayed in them is, they cannot suit the present taste, being entirely alien to facts and based on things which have no reality in the world. They are, in fact, if over-read, calculated to turn a man's head like Done Quixote, and make him seek adventures, conquering by the force of wonderful Talismans, destroying and rebuilding imaginary castles at will. In addition to these books of the old type, India had recently produced some books very much like novels, but not novels strictly speaking, Maulvi Nazir Ahmed's books, which, as has been seen, are stories written with an earnest and serious purpose, are too classical in language for a novel and the one chief feature of a novel, a certain amount of sensation and excitement is absolutely wanting in them. They are novels inasmuch as they are drawn from real life and one feels as he reads the *Mirat-ul-Urus*, or the *Taubat-un-Nasuh*, that each one of the fictitious characters in the story has a prototype in real life in Hindustani homes. The books, however, are meant mostly for women, to supply the greatly felt need of providing a wholesome literature for females and the learned Maulvi has indulged in no love scenes in his books, as conservative India, where there are still persons opposing female edu-

cation, could not think it proper to place love stories in the hands of the female world. So we may say that absorbing though the stories written by Maulvi Nazir Ahmad are in interest they have but little claim to be classified as novels. The only other writer contending for rivalry with *Sharar* as the originator of the Urdu novel can be his own Lucknow contemporary, whose works have been considered in the previous chapter *i.e.*, Pandit Ratan Nath. He called his *Fisana-i-Azad* a novel and all his subsequent writing great and small bear the title. In simplicity of style, in picturing real life in Lucknow and in sensation and excitement, the Pandit's books deserve to be called novels. The trouble, however, is that they are so unwieldy in length, that the plot, though capable of being interesting, grows obscure and leaves no impression of a continued story upon the mind. No language of the world, I can daresay, boasts of a book professing to be a novel so voluminous as the *Fisana-i-Azad* and thus if we call it a novel, it must be beyond the ordinary run and we are concerned here with the ordinary class. *Sharar's* novels are about the usual length of those of Sir Walter Scott and seem to be more like his works than of any other writer in the English language. Now the *Fisana-i-Azad* could be broken into at least a hundred novels of *Sharar* or Sir Walter Scott and surely if a novel means that, it is something tremendous. It is thus clear that *Sharar* holds the first place as a writer of novels in Urdu but if there be any hesitation in giving him this distinction, no one can take away from him the distinction, of being the first writer of novels of chivalry in Urdu like Sir Walter Scott in English.

Coming back to his career and that of his magazine we lose sight of both for some time. Maulvi Abdul Halim was offered some situation in

Hyderabad, which is a place having great attraction for literary men from the early periods of its history. In an account of the life of the great poet Zauq of Delhi, we find, that he was invited to go to Hyderabad and offered very good prospects, but he contented himself to remain at Delhi, on the pittance he could get from the Delhi Durbar. Our present literary men are all more or less connected with the State and have in one way or other felt the bounty of the appreciative rulers of the State. *Dag*, one of the best poets of India was enjoying a very handsome salary there as the Poet Laureate. *Girami*, another poet, whose Persian verses may do credit to a born native of Persia belongs to the Hyderabad Court. We have seen that Maulvi Nazir Ahmad, served and rose to eminence in the State though in another capacity. Pandit Ratan Nath also found a home there and lived at Hyderabad during the last years of his life. The two Bilgrami brothers, models of learning and scholarship, have been the ornaments of the Hyderabad State. Nawab Muhsin-ul-Mulk was one of the brightest gems of the Deccan Court. Sir Syad Ahmad Khan, though not wanting in anything personally, got a munificent and princely help for his College from the State. Maulvi Shibli was endowed with a respectable pension for continuing his literry work of compiling books on Islamic history. In short every branch of learning and every literary man with any real worth to boast of can find an appreciation and reward in Hyderabad and *Sharar* also went to take the reward of the name he had made for himself. He might have benefitted by this arrangement from a pecuniary point of view but he greatly disappointed his readers. Literary labour in India, is not yet very paying and anybody taking to literature as a profession must be prepared to make some sacrifices. To be a writer has, as a

rule, with certain very rare exceptions, been synonimous with want and poverty. Go to Persia, you find the same complaint among the authors, go to England before the latter part of the nineteenth century and you find scholars like Johnson living in penury, Goldsmith selling his best work for sixty pounds, living in debt and in constant fear of the debtor's prison. India has been no exception. With the nineteenth century, there has dawued upon Europe and America an era when the sales of popular books have brought in fortunes to their writers, but that stage is yet far distant in India. The present generation of writers in the west, is reaping the fruits of the labours of their predecessors, and flourishing days for literature can never come for India, unless the present writers undertake some risks, though not so large as those related about the past. The yielding to temptation of gain of a man like *Sharar*, and his giving up his literary productions for a time, therefore, was felt as greatly disappointing by the reading public. Certain circumstances last year had led us to hope that the Maulvi had returned to the field of his work more fitted than ever for it. His knowledge of English, formerly was not very vast and he relied more on his acquaintance with Arabic and Persian historical literature for his writings. In Hyderabad he found an opportunity of accompanying the son of His Excellency the Prime Minister to England, whence he came back, perhaps enriched with higher notions of blending the beauties of English literature with Urdu and producing a unique effect upon the latter. He again issued his magazine under the same name, with apologies for an estrangement from the public for some time, and the novel begun by him related to life in Pre-Islamic Arabia which could not but have a special interest for students of Muhammadan history. The study in this novel of the pictures of

life in the darkest days of Arabïa could show how tremendous was the task which Islam had to perform in reforming the degenerate Arabs of those days and how successfully it performed it. But he plunged agaiu into the whirlpool of State politics, and it is but irregularly that his magazine has appeared even since his return from England. If *Sharar* could have earnestly taken to literature again and made some further improvements in Urdu writing engrafting some useful English methods in composition on it, his interval of absence, coud have proved a blessing, instead of being regretted.

As regards *Sharar's* style, it is as new to Urdu as the plan of his writings. It is crisp and racy and the best proof of the fact that it has taken well with the public is that it has found a large number of imitators among whom many have succeeded to a large extent. It is not inimitable like that of Maulvi Nazir Ahmad or Professor Azad. Many magazines of the same description and many novels of the same type, but not of the same merit have followed the publication of his books. This means that he has made a mark on Urdu literature which will not easily be forgotten. As the saying goes, a prophet is not valued at home, so *Sharars'* style is the least appreciated in Lucknow. Other parts of India admire it. The conventionalism in Lucknow finds in it a revolt against itself. But masters of the language as tho Lucknow people can claim to be, they must remember that they devote too much attention to mere discussion about words, and their pride as to their being the sole possessors of the language is a serious bar to their making any real progress. Anybody belonging to a village at some distance from Lucknow, no matter if he is educated in Lucknow and brought up there is stigmatised as a *Ganwar* and is given no right to claim to know the Urdu language. This spirit of criticism harms

more the critic than the person criticised, as intrinsic worth in a book cannot fail to be recognised by the Urdu-knowing public at large, because some Lucknow critics have to find fault with an expression or two, shutting their eyes to all the beauties of the production.

"Printed by Ghulam Qadir Khan at The Educational Printing Works," situated at the Hospital Road, Lahore, and Published by Sh. Mubarik Ali, Bookseller, Inside Lohari Gate, Lahore.